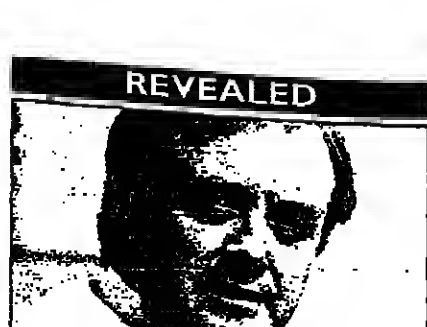




FEATURES

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS
Nightmare world of the celebrity nanny. Page 16



REVEALED

THE DOUBLE LIFE OF GERRY ROBINSON
Secrets of Britain's new arts supremo. Page 16



EXCLUSIVE

I'M FREE AT LAST
By the woman wrongly jailed for murder. Page 15



THE EYE

THE BIG APPLE BECKONS ...
Win a weekend for two in New York

THE INDEPENDENT

Friday 6 February 1998 45p No 3,527

Brown swoops to save doomed estates

THE 20 WORST estates in the most deprived parts of the country are to be targeted by the Government in an extension of the "New Deal" drive against poverty.

The initiative was revealed by Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, in an exclusive interview with *The Independent*. But there was confusion about the move in Whitehall and Westminster last night, with some senior ministers clearly taken by surprise by the Treasury-led initiative.

There was a strong feeling that some of the Prime Minister's colleagues were again flexing their

muscles, taking advantage of his absence in Washington. Last night, in a keynote political speech agreed with Tony Blair in advance of his departure on Wednesday evening, David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, said the challenge of welfare reform was "to turn Britain into a nation of victors over adversity, rather than victims trapped on benefit."

Speaking in Cardiff, he said that the Government was advocating a return of the "get-up-and-go" enthusiasm drained from the community by 18 years of Conservative government, which created a system

that rewarded people maximising "the extent of their illness, their disability, their poverty, and their dependence on others."

Mr Brown and John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, are to launch the initiative which will bring together spending from several government programmes. But it was unclear whether the "launch" would be delivered by Mr Prescott in a speech to Labour's local government conference, in Scarborough, tonight.

The drive will involve the Social Exclusion Unit, and focus resources on estates with some of the worst social problems. In the 20 worst estates

By Diana Coyle and Anthony Bevins

as many as seven out of ten working-age households have nobody in work, the proportion of lone-parent families is three times the national average and there is six times the average rate of truancy from school.

Very few of these high-priority estates have amenities such as nurseries, good public transport, or local businesses, according to Whitehall studies. The new initiative is expected to be focused on inner-city areas. Among the estates likely to be on the high priority list are Stone-

bridge Park, north-west London; Blackbird Leys, Oxford; North Prospect in Plymouth; Toxteth, Merseyside; Ordsall, Salford; and estates in Newcastle and Manchester.

A recent Whitehall analysis has revealed that although more public money is spent in the most deprived areas, most of it is passive spending such as benefit payments. Under the initiative the Government's existing New Deal programmes will be extended to tilt the balance of spending towards creating work opportunities and improving education and training in the specifically targeted estates.

The programme could start with pilot schemes, and the Government is looking at how to involve the private sector. It plans to build on existing successful local community projects, drawing up a register of the ones that could be used as templates for other parts of the country.

Funding for the plan, which will co-ordinate spending by a range of government departments and local authorities, will probably be announced in the Budget next month. The money is likely to come from the existing welfare-to-work funds in the first instance, with much more allocated after the announcement of

the public expenditure under summer.

Mr Brown has spent money on compensating people for it, but we have not tackled it of poverty."

The Chancellor said the key new initiative would be its comprehensive approach. There would be co-ordination with the recently established health, employment and education action zones. But he emphasised that job creation was the most important aspect. "Regeneration in these areas has got to be economic and employment-led," he said.

No distance between them: the Clintons and the Blairs join forces against Saddam



With their husbands preparing to talk of war, Cherie Blair and Hillary Clinton stand together at a welcoming ceremony for the British couple at the White House yesterday. Tony Blair gave his friend Bill Clinton his full support in the Iraq crisis. Photograph: AP

Britain and US speak with one voice

LIPPING the pressure on Iraq still further, President Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, used a joint appearance at the White House to impress upon Baghdad that it must comply with UN resolutions on weapons inspections or risk the use of force.

Responding to Mr Clinton's welcome on his first official visit to Washington, Mr Blair said he wanted a diplomatic solution to the crisis, "but the success or failure of diplomacy rests on Saddam. If he fails to respond, then he knows that the threat of force is there and it is real."

Mr Clinton said the United States and Britain "will stand against those who defy the will of the international community by maintaining stability in the

From Mary Dejevsky in Washington

Persian Gulf". But he indicated that he was still agonising over a decision to use force and tried to dispel growing speculation that the US might be preparing to try to topple the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein.

Citing US policy, which specifically states that political assassinations are not in US foreign policy interests, Mr Clinton said: "Our interest is in preventing Saddam Hussein from building biological, chemical, nuclear weapons capability [and] the weapons to deliver such weapons... that's where the authority from the United Nations resolutions rests."

Earlier, Mr Blair had used a



Leaders: stressed unity and readiness. Photograph: AP

blitz of appearances on US television breakfast shows to underline Britain's support for the United States over Iraq. There must, he said, "be a real threat of force and the use of force if necessary". Asked about yesterday's report in *The Independent* that air strikes were due to commence in 12 days' time unless Iraq backed down, Mr Blair said it was "highly speculative", but he did not deny it.

The Pentagon, meanwhile, announced that a 2,200-strong detachment of marines were being dispatched to the Gulf.

It was also reported that a third US aircraft carrier, the *Independence*, had arrived in the region. It joins two larger US aircraft carriers and a British carrier already deployed there.

But the logistics of an operation may still not be secure. The US has just failed to extract undertakings from Saudi Arabia to allow the US to use its facilities in any assault on Iraq.

Obtaining a consensus in the UN for the renewed use of force is also proving difficult, with China, Russia, Egypt and most of the Arab states opposed.

Cook's search, page 12

Equal in the Army, so long as you're not gay

WHAT, exactly, is an equal opportunities employer? As far as the Army is concerned, it is an employer that offers equal opportunities - to everyone but gays.

The question arose yesterday when the Advertising Standards Authority said it was investigating whether the Army can truthfully claim to be such an employer, given that homosexuals are banned from serving in its ranks.

The ASA has received complaints about a recruitment poster in which the Army in effect brags about its enlightened policies. The poster features four soldiers of different ethnic origins, and carries the slogan: "The Army Can't Be An Equal Opportunities Employer

Without You." The ASA has decided that there is a case to answer and has begun a formal investigation into possible breaches of its guidelines. If it judges the advertisement to be misleading or untruthful, it can order it to be withdrawn or amended.

All three armed services have a long-standing ban on serving homosexuals, which is being contested before the European Court of Human Rights.

The poster, which has appeared on buses and boardings in the regions, is part of a recruitment drive launched by the Army last year to attract more peo-

ple from ethnic minorities. At the time, General Sir Roger Wheeler, chief of the general staff, said that the Army wished to counter lingering perceptions that it was a racist organisation. It appears to be less sensitive, however, to charges of sexual prejudice. Yesterday, a spokesman said: "We are not equal opportunities employers as far as homosexuals are concerned, and that is a legal position."

"We don't employ homosexuals and the advertisement does not invite applications from homosexuals, nor does it lead anyone to suppose that we are inviting such applications. In that sense it is truthful to our employment policy."

Previous posters have stated that the

Army is an equal opportunities employer, but only as a line at the bottom. It is the prominence of it in this latest advertisement that prompted the ASA to take action. "In the past, we have taken the view that most people would be aware that it was the Army's definition of equal opportunities that applied," said a spokesman.

The ASA has contacted the Army and asked it to justify the statement, which it believes may contravene two clauses of its code: the need to provide objective substantiation of any claim, if challenged, and the rule that advertisements should not mislead "through inaccuracy, ambiguity, exaggeration, omission or otherwise".

'I've had enough' says doyen of BBC drama

MICHAEL WEARING, the man responsible for some of the BBC's biggest critical successes in recent times, including *Pride and Prejudice*, *Boys from the Blackstuff*, and *Our Friends in the North*, is quitting the corporation in disgust at the way its television drama department is being run.

In an interview with *The Stage*, published yesterday, Mr Wearing said: "I have no choice. It is creatively impossible for me to remain."

He said the "straw that broke the camel's back" was a refusal by the new controller of BBC1, Peter Salmon, to back a screen adaptation of a novel by the crime writer Janet Neel.

That decision, he suspected, had been based upon the feedback from US-style focus groups, which he believes are having a bigger and bigger say in what the BBC commissions.

Veteran producer Kenneth Todd, who quit the BBC a year ago after branding its drama de-



Wearing: 'kind of fig leaf'

partment "a total mess", said losing the head of drama serials would be a big loss to the corporation.

Mr Todd - whose own credits include the Dennis Potter plays *Pennies From Heaven* and

The Singing Detective - described Mr Wearing as "the only man of integrity" still holding a high post in the BBC's strifetorn television drama department. "For the executives he is a kind of fig leaf covering what is going on," he said.

Mr Wearing, who has been outspoken throughout his career, and almost quit two years ago, was not available for comment yesterday.

The BBC issued a brief statement which read: "Michael Wearing is due to retire next year and is obviously discussing his future plans outside the BBC, so he may decide to go sooner rather than later."

Mr Wearing did indicate in the interview that he has other work - what he called his "parachute" - lined up. Having received a special Bafta award last year for his outstanding contribution to British television, he should not be short of alternative offers.

Drama crisis, page 3

Today's news

Schoolboys cleared

THREE primary school boys were acquitted yesterday at the Old Bailey of indecently assaulting a nine-year-old girl at their school. The case raised questions about the suitability of holding the trial of such young children at the Old Bailey, Britain's most famous court. Page 3

Irvine backs down

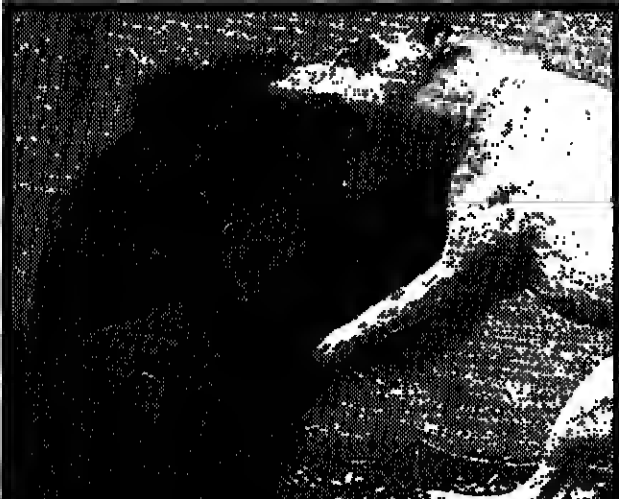
THE Lord Chancellor was forced to retreat last night after his demand for new restraints on the press was dismissed as "censorship" by Lord Wakeham, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission. Page 4

Health blueprint

TARGETS for creating a healthier nation were set out by the Government yesterday as part of its strategy for reducing the health gap between the rich and the poor. Page 6

Murdoch under fire

LABOUR'S revolt against the press power of Rupert Murdoch was joined yesterday by Lord Hattersley, the party's former deputy leader, as peers geared up for Monday's vote on a tougher media competition law. Page 8



Help stop this now

Day after day, this bear is dragged into a bloody arena to face pairs of bull terriers. His teeth have been ripped out and his claws blunted, so he is at the dogs' mercy. The bear doesn't know the trainer won't let him be killed, but the bear doesn't know this. Over and over again, he is fighting for his life.

Over 2,000 bear-baitings take place each year in Pakistan, despite the fact that they are now banned by law.

Our Liberty campaign frees captive bears, campaigns to enforce laws protecting bears, and fights ignorance with training and education.

Please help WSPA's campaign against bear baiting. Return this coupon with your gift to the address below.

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

I enclose my donation of £ _____

Please make cheques payable to WSPA or fill in your credit card details below.)

Visa/MasterCard/Amex/Discover/ATM/Debit Card (circle as applicable)

Card No. _____

(If using Switch, please use the number printed in the middle of your card.)

Expiry date _____ Switch issue no _____ Today's date _____

Signature _____

☐ Tick here if you would like a free information pack.

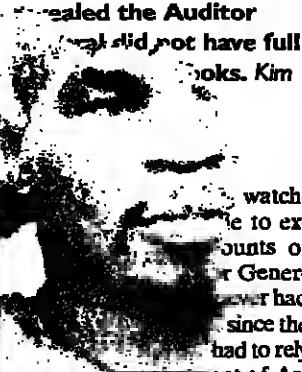
Please send this completed form and your donation to: WSPA, Dept. AL504, Prepost. N42604, Northampton, NN5 6ER. No stamp is needed. THANK YOU.

Ref: Charity No. 232305

WSPA
World Society for the Protection of Animals

MPs call for new audit powers over Camelot

The auditing procedures for Camelot may be tightened after it was revealed that the Auditor General did not have full access to all relevant details.



Tyson: Feels betrayed by King and is seeking to break his contract, the promoter and Oflot have been

watching the accounts of the General since the had to rely on the ent of As- per regula- King and is seeking everything break his contract, the promoter and Oflot have been

Football: The National

at this is denied

Parliament by Sir

turn. He stated: "I am

quired to attest to the ad-

of the Director Gener-

of Assurances. Moreover, since

I do not have audit access to the

Lottery Operator, Camelot, I

cannot assess independently

whether the Director General's

procedures have sufficient re-

gard to the risks and controls in

the Camelot systems."

After the forced resignation

of Peter Davis, MPs are de-

manding changes to make the lottery much more accountable. The powerful House of Commons Public Accounts Committee will be pressing the Government to increase Sir John's powers and give his office full access to all relevant details.

One committee member, Alan Williams, Labour MP for Swansea West, said: "This is a shortcoming we must address, and what is unfolding at the moment makes it important that we do so as soon as possible."

Whitehall sources indicate the idea would be favourably received. The sources also state that the Department of Culture Media and Sport is considering a number of options on the future of the US company GTEch in the Camelot Consortium.

GTEch owns 22.5 per cent stake in Camelot which had earned it more than £12m so far. It also has a contract for supplying the computers and the terminals at sales outlets which has to date gained the company payments totalling £66.2 million. That some goes not to GTEch UK but straight to its offices in America.

One option being considered by the Government would be to keep the equipment contract with GTEch, the removal of which could pose severe logistical problems in running the



Happier days: The directors of Camelot when the lottery was launched in October 1993. Photograph: Craig Easton

game, but detach it from the consortium.

A Camelot spokeswoman said: "We shall of course do whatever the new Director General says, but we see no rea-

son why GTEch should have to leave the consortium. They are

The GTEch boss Guy Snowden, who lost a libel action against Richard Branson and

since then resigned from the company's British and US arms should not receive any direct financial benefit from the UK game, Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, had indicat-

ed. However, a GTEch spokeswoman said Mr Snowden did not receive any dividend payments on his shares, so the only way he could benefit from them would be through selling them.

A stitch in time: Brides ask surgeons to restore virginity

Doctors in The Netherlands are reconstructing the hymens of young women so they appear to be virgins when they marry.

The women, from immigrant communities, fear that if they cannot show a bloody sheet after their wedding night, their families will be ashamed

and they may risk violence and banishment.

However, the practice has drawn criticism from British colleagues who say it is unethical. Some say it involves "collusion with deceit" and that it "confirms sexual inequality", perpetuating the view that

promiscuity is acceptable only for men. Others say it should be regarded as cosmetic surgery.

Dr A Logmans, a consultant gynaecologist, and colleagues at the Daniel den Hoed clinic in Rotterdam, describe in the *British Medical Journal* how they repair the hymen by stitching to-

gether the scarred remnants. If necessary, they dissect a strip of tissue from the vagina to reconstruct the hymen. The procedure is carried out in outpatients and the patient has the right to have their medical notes destroyed.

A study of the first 20

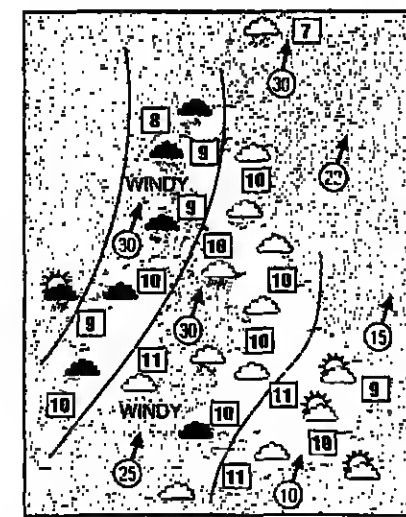
women, aged 16 to 23, who had the operation in 1993, showed none had any regrets. Half claimed they lost their virginity as a result of sexual abuse. All opted to destroy their notes.

In a *BMJ* commentary, Dr Sara Paterson-Brown, consultant gynaecologist at Queen Charlotte's

Hospital, London, says the operation is justifiable "where women would otherwise suffer disgrace or worse." In Egypt the trade in hymen repairs has reduced "cleansing" murders by 80 per cent over 10 years, she says.

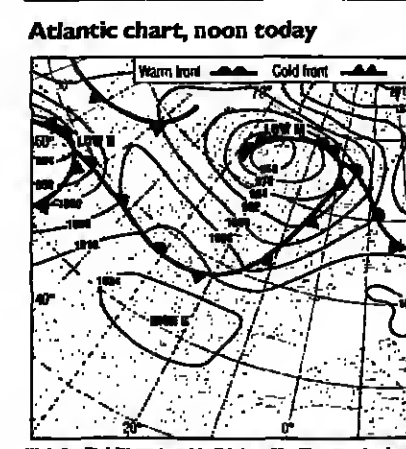
— Jeremy Lawrence
Health Editor

WEATHER



Noon today
Scotland and Northern Ireland will be wet and windy, with spells of heavy rain clearing to leave blustery showers towards evening, but eastern Scotland will at least start the day dry. Western parts of Wales and the south-west and north-west of England will be mostly cloudy and breezy with spots of drizzle, giving way to heavier rain by evening. The rest of England and Wales will be dry with sunny spells, but it will band to cloud over from the west later. It will be a mild day everywhere.

Outlook for the next few days
On Saturday, rain will quickly clear the south-east of England, then all parts will have a bright and cold day with sunshine and blustery showers. Most of the showers will be in the north and west. Sunday will start bright and chilly in the south, but the north will see cloud and drizzle later. It will however start to become a little milder. The warming trend will continue on Monday with further rain in western Scotland but elsewhere it will be dry.



Air quality
Yesterday's readings
London: Moderate
S. England: Moderate
Wales: Good
C. England: Good
N. England: Good
Scotland: Good
N. Ireland: Good

British Isles weather most recent available figures at noon local time
C: cloudy, O: clear, F: fog, H: haze, M: mist, R: rain, S: sunny, ST: storm, SH: showers, SN: snow, TH: thunder

Aberdeen	10-14	Cardiff	10-14	Exeter	10-14
Aberystwyth	10-14	Carlisle	10-14	Exeter	10-14
Anglesey	10-14	Carmarthen	10-14	Exeter	10-14
Armagh	10-14	Carmarthen	10-14	Exeter	10-14
Belfast	10-14	Carmarthen	10-14	Exeter	10-14
Birmingham	10-14	Carmarthen	10-14	Exeter	10-14
Birmingham	10-14	Carmarthen	10-14	Exeter	10-14
Birmingham	10-14	Carmarthen	10-14	Exeter	10-14
Birmingham	10-14	Carmarthen	10-14	Exeter	10-14
Birmingham	10-14	Carmarthen	10-14	Exeter	10-14

High tides

	AM	PM	HT
London	06:56	6.3	21.47
Liverpool	06:39	7.7	19.16
Avonmouth	02:00	10.5	14.45
Hull (Albert Dock)	01:11	7.7	14.10
Greenwich	07:27	3.0	20.21
Dun Laoghaire	07:28	3.7	19.55

Lighting-up times

	AM	PM	HT
Belfast	17:12	10	08:02
Birmingham	17:03	10	07:39
Bristol	17:09	10	07:39
Glasgow	17:04	10	08:00
London	16:59	10	07:30
Manchester	17:01	10	07:44
Newcastle	16:53	10	07:46

Sun & moon

Sun rise:	07:31	Sun sets:	16:59
Moon rises:	12:38	Moon sets:	03:25
New Moon:	February 11		

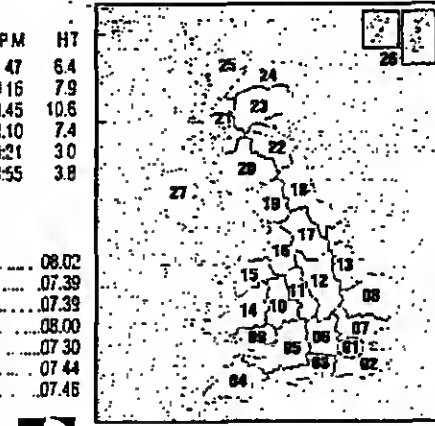
Out and about with AA Roadwatch

Call 0336 401777 for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calfs charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).

World weather

most recent available figure at noon local time

Australia	12-16	Chile	13-20	China	10-16
Canada	10-14	Colombia	20-24	Colombia	10-16
Canada	10-14	Colombia	20-24	Colombia	10-16
Canada	10-14	Colombia	20-24	Colombia	10-16
Canada	10-14	Colombia	20-24	Colombia	10-16
Canada	10-14	Colombia	20-24	Colombia	10-16
Canada	10-14	Colombia	20-24	Colombia	10-16
Canada	10-14	Colombia	20-24	Colombia	10-16
Canada	10-14	Colombia	20-24	Colombia	10-16
Canada	10-14	Colombia	20-24	Colombia	10-16



INDEPENDENT Weatherline
For the latest forecasts call 0891 5009 followed by the two digits for your area indicated by the above map. Source: The Met Office. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).



WILLIAM HARTSTON
WEATHER WISE

According to my 1998 Weather Whys and Wonders Calendar (from Accord Publishing Ltd, Denver, Colorado), yesterday was National Weatherperson's Day in the US. To judge from weather reports, however, they must all have been too busy to celebrate it, as California was hit by its first major El Niño storm of the season.

Seven inches of rain fell on the north of the state on Tuesday, forcing thousands to evacuate their homes as rivers burst their banks and sodden hillsides collapsed into torrents of mud. Southern California was hit at

most as badly, with mudslides and flooding, and a state of alert around the Pajaro river, which was four feet above flood-warning level.

After a calm Wednesday, emergency services braced themselves yesterday as more winter storms lined up in the Pacific, ready to bring more wind and rain. "We definitely expect flooding, and possibly disastrous flooding," said Dan Keirns of the National Weather Service. "This is not a normal winter pattern. It is a winter pattern that has been all charged up."

El Niño, of course, is the culprit. Its warm water in the Pacific warms the air above it, the currents created by the rising warm air bring wind, and the

The world's biggest deep freeze is open for business again after a \$75m renovation. The McKinley Climatic Laboratory has in the past been used mainly for testing whether military equipment will stand up to severe weather conditions. "We can create any type of climatic conditions that you would want to operate in," said the laboratory director, Kirk Velasco, though he qualified that claim by admitting they could not duplicate a tornado or hurricane.

Hail, sandstorms, dust storms, 100mph winds or monsoons are no problem, and you can have any temperature you want from -54C to +74C.

Testing of planes has been a major part of the work of the laboratory. The present major reconstruction of the laboratory followed damage caused to an F-117 stealth fighter by an ice-icle falling from the ceiling of the test chamber. It had formed from humid outside air leaking through the walls. Now icicle-free, the lab is back in business. "Our snow consistency is extremely good compared to what you get out there in the real world," said its director. The wrong sort for testing British Rail trains, then.

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Leader & letters	18	TV & radio	Eye, 11 & 12

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هكذا من الأصل

Boys cleared of rape and assault of girl, 9, at school

Four boys have been cleared of raping and indecently assaulting a nine-year-old girl at their primary school. The case, says Jason Bennetto, Crime Correspondent, poses questions about how courts and the police should deal with children accused of such serious offences.

It was a terrible, harrowing story – a nine-year-old girl allegedly raped and sexually assaulted in the school lavatory by a gang of pupils aged from 9 to 11. But as the Old Bailey jury yesterday acquitted the last of the defendants, following a three-week trial, a national children's charity called for a change in the law to prevent such a trial ever being repeated.

New legislation has lowered the age at which children can be

charged with rape to 10 and this case is believed to involve Britain's youngest ever defendants for that offence. Despite attempts to make Court 12 at the Old Bailey – the country's highest criminal court – more child-friendly with the use of crayons, video links and colouring books, it was condemned last night as "inappropriate".

Questions have also been asked as to whether the police and Crown prosecutors should

ever have brought the case in the first place when the conviction relied so heavily on the girl's testimony. The two boys, one aged 10 and one 11, were cleared yesterday of the sex attack on the girl, now aged 10, in the boys' lavatory at their school in west London in May last year.

On Tuesday two 10-year-olds were also acquitted of the rape charges on the direction of the judge. A third 10-year-old was cleared on the same day of

indecent assault. The judge said a police interviewer had asked leading and wholly improper questions of the defendant.

The girl had been raped and beaten by a group of men in her native Jamaica at the age of six before moving to Britain. She alleged that a group of five boys dragged her into lavatories at their school, forcibly stripped her, then took it in turns to rape her as the others looked on.

The headmistress of the pri-

mary school where the alleged attack took place had told the jury that one boy said the girl "wanted to do it". The girl was deeply affected by her experiences in Jamaica and had started a number of fires and told her mother that voices had made her do it. Before asking the jurors to retire, the judge had warned them: "In the light of her undoubted discrepancies in her account, her history of fantasies, her reputation at

school for telling untruths and blaming others, and her vulnerable, needy personality, I strongly advise you to exercise caution before acting on her evidence alone."

After the case the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, said: "The NSPCC believes that a formal adult court setting is an inappropriate place to deal with children, whether they are victims, defendants or witnesses.

A spokeswoman for the Crown Prosecution Service said that under the present law such serious charges as rape cannot be heard at a youth court and must be tried in a criminal court.

Since the rape allegation emerged so many parents have taken their children away from the school where the alleged assault took place that the local education authority has decided to close it this summer.

Drama chief quits BBC as changes bring a life of misery

BBC spin doctors have gone into a tailspin over the comments of the Corporation's head of drama series who is poised to quit over what he calls "rampant commercialisation". Rob Brown, Media Editor, reports.

If only the BBC could make a drama about its own drama department, whose perpetual internal tensions yet again exploded into public view yesterday.

The man credited with some of the corporation's finest creative successes is poised to quit. Michael Wearing, head of drama series, who brought *Boys from the Blackstuff*, *Our Friends in the North* and *Pride and Prejudice* to our screens, along with *Common as Muck* and *House of Cards*, claims that it is "creatively impossible" to remain in post because "rampant commercialisation" has made his life "a misery".

His scathing comments instantly sent the drama department's spindocors at Television Centre into a spin. They did everything in their power to limit the damage, claiming that Mr Wearing was annoyed because the new controller of BBC1, Peter Salmon, had refused to commission a project on which he was keen – an adaptation of a crime novel by Janet Neel.

Whilst acknowledging that he is the doyen of television drama, they pointed out that he is 59 and has lined up other work outside the corporation. They issued a terse statement: "Michael is due to retire next year and is obviously discussing his future plans outside the BBC, so he may have to go sooner rather than later."

BBC bosses are obviously starting to find Mr Wearing's outspokenness more than a bit wearing. "I think the most significant point to note is that his comments were made at a party," was the response from a spokesman who obviously doesn't



Last of the summer wine: The BBC's failure to commission a new series of *This Life*, above, caused a major row last year. Michael Wearing's credits include *Pride and Prejudice*, below, *House of Cards*, left, and *Common as Muck*.



need any lessons from Peter Mandelson in the black art of character assassination.

The *Stage*, the actors' trade paper, reported Mr Wearing's comments which were made at a recent party to celebrate the British presence at the forthcoming Banff International Television Festival in Canada. But several other (apparently very sober) leading television dramatists

were swift to echo his damning criticisms yesterday. Trevor Griffiths told *The Independent*: "Michael Wearing is in the great tradition of BBC drama producers. The thought that he's been driven out of the corporation by its new commercial ethos is appalling."

Mr Griffiths, it should be said, crossed swords with BBC apparatchiks himself re-

cently when his drama commemorating the anniversary of Nye Bevan's birth was downgraded to a graveyard slot on BBC2. The legendary Labour politician was portrayed by Brian Cox, who was so incensed by the treatment of the film that penned a powerful polemic for *The Independent* on Sunday denouncing the "dumbing down" of BBC drama.

Michael Wearing was given a special Bafta award last year in recognition of his outstanding creative contribution to television. Even the BBC spindocors acknowledged yesterday that "the shows he makes cause waves and create talking points". They must be praying that one project he doesn't have in mind is a drama about the BBC drama department.

Labour's philistines come under attack

The philistinism of new Labour comes under savage attack from a Labour MP today, with Tony Blair depicted as the man who will be "tough on the arts, tough on the causes of arts". Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, reports a cry of dissent from the ranks.

Brian Sedgmore, MP for Hackney South and Shoreditch, will tell a Tate Gallery conference today that just as the Prime Minister believed in politics without conflict, he appeared to want art without subversion.

In a prepared text, he says: "New Labour wants art that is as pungent as processed cheese, as soul-searching as a conversation between Po, Laa-Laa, Dipsy and the other Teletubbies, as original as Dolly the Sheep. As part of the politics of contentment, new Labour wants colours that do not clash, textures that do not distort, and shapes which Cubists would not understand."

"Turner in, conceptual art out, should hereinafter be the slogan that hangs outside the Tate. And please keep that painting which depicts Stanley Spencer's aching balls away from Tony's children. Surely there are less traumatic ways to express impotent love."

Mr Sedgmore, who claims more artists per square metre live in Hackney than anywhere else in the world, says: "The threat to fine arts institutions is that deep down new Labour, notwithstanding its sensitive, cultured secretary of state, Chris Smith, is every bit as philistine as Old Toryism."

"It doesn't want sensations or palm prints of Myra Hindley or visual satire which mocks the most powerful image in Western Christendom. I somehow can't see Harriet Harman sending out Christmas cards which have the mother of Jesus in the background tilling the fields around Bethlehem, with the son of God being looked after by a child-minder in the foreground."

But Mr Sedgmore becomes even more savage when dealing with the Stepford Wives – "that's those female new Labour MPs who've had the chip inserted into their brain to keep them on message, and who collectively put down women and children in the vote on lone parents' benefits. Few of them have shown any interest in culture."

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"Press censorship of this sort is unacceptable in a democratic society – a point I think you and government ministers



William Hague, the Tory leader, was

"Not content with a huge majority in the House of Commons the Government now seems to be arguing that they should not be subject to any scrutiny at all," he said in a speech to Tories in Neil Hamilton's former Tatton seat.

"You cannot deal with invasion of privacy with a post-hoc measure -- it has to be before the disclosure. In Robin Cook's case, the family were caused considerable distress by the disclosure of something that was personal and it was not of general public interest."

Would a privacy law have prevented these stories from being published?

- Robert Maxwell's crooked business affairs and his years, journalists had soiled under legal threats from Maxwell to prove his empire was built on sand. In France, Maxwell used privacy laws to gag journalists. In Britain, word about his phoney empire seeped out before he died.
- David Mellor's extra-marital affair with Antonia de Sacchi. In 1992, might have been regarded by some as an invasion of privacy. But prove an interest in the whereabouts of such a minister, had been known on holidays paid for by Mona Brewsters, whose father was a Palestine Liberation Organisation paymaster. He subsequently resigned.
- A series of Conservative ministers and MPs resigned after the party adopted its Back to Basics policy and began preaching about family values.
- Environment minister Tim Yeaton stood down after it was revealed in December 1993 that he had fathered a child by a Tory councillor.
- In January 1994, David Ashby resigned as a parliamentary private secretary after admitting during a hotel bar with a male friend.
- In February 1994, Hardy Booth resigned as a parliamentary private secretary as a result of a relationship with a Commons researcher.
- In 1995, Citizen's Charter minister, Robert Hughes, went after disclosure of an extra-marital affair, and Richard Spring resigned as a PPS after allegations of a three-in-a-bed romp.

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gret appointing him, but it is incredibly difficult to remove a Lord Chancellor," said another MP with a legal background. "Some have been beheaded, and maybe that's the way forward. There would be no shortage of volunteers."

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AT CINEMA

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Jailed woman is cleared of killing her aunt for legacy

A music teacher was freed at the Old Bailey yesterday after finally being cleared of murdering her aunt for her legacy. Sheila Bowler, whose daughter Jane wept in her arms outside court after the jury's unanimous verdict, had endured two full murder trials and more than four years in jail after she was accused of driving her 89-year-old aunt to the River Brede near Rye in East Sussex and pushing her in.

Mrs Bowler, 68, who had always protested her innocence, was convicted at Hove Crown Court in 1993 of murdering Florence Jackson. But the Court of Appeal quashed

the conviction and ordered a re-trial last year after new medical evidence emerged.

Mrs Bowler, from Rye, denied murdering Mrs Jackson in May 1992 while driving her from a residential home to her own house. The prosecution alleged that she had dragged Mrs Jackson from her car to the river. Her body was found the following day.

Anthony Glass QC, for the prosecution, alleged that Mrs Bowler killed Mrs Jackson on the journey then covered up her deed by pretending her aunt - who normally needed help to walk - must have made her way to the river and accidentally fallen in.

Mrs Bowler said she had left Mrs Jackson - known as Aunt Flo - in her car when she went to get help for a flat tyre. When she returned she had disappeared.

Jeremy Roberts QC, for the defence, said the prosecution "had not produced one shred of direct evidence to connect Mrs Bowler with whatever it was that happened to Mrs Jackson that night". He told the jury: "No witness claims to have seen Mrs Bowler or her car at the pumping station or in Station Road that night. There is no scientific evidence suggesting Mrs Bowler had ever been in that area."

Professor Archibald Young, an expert in geriatric behaviour, who was called as a defence witness, had told the jury that people of Mrs Jackson's age and condition could have walked the quarter-of-a-mile from the car to the river by themselves.

The court had heard that Mrs Jackson was the aunt of Mrs Bowler's late husband, and that her only asset was a flat in Rye which she was leaving to her niece. Mrs Bowler had power of attorney and was responsible for arranging payment of fees at Greyfriars, a residential nursing home at Winchelsea where Mrs Jackson lived. She

owed more than £3,000 in arrears and the flat would have to be sold.

Mr Glass alleged that she had a financial interest in Mrs Jackson's death, saying that every month Mrs Jackson lived, the value of Mrs Bowler's inheritance diminished. But Mrs Bowler said that she received £17,500 a year from teaching at private schools and pensions. The mortgage on her home was paid off and she had savings.

After the verdict Mrs Bowler said she felt vindicated. "I do not feel bitter, but I am very angry that I had been convicted [earlier] of this. I lost my faith in the justice system," she said, adding that her ordeal had been "a living nightmare".

The campaign to free her was led by Tim and Angela Devlin, whose daughters were contemporaries of Jane Bowler at school.

Tim Devlin's father, Lord Devlin, played a part in the release of the Guildford Four. Channel Four said yesterday that a special edition of *Trial and Error*, which investigated the Bowler case, will be broadcast on Monday, showing Mrs Bowler, her family and lawyers, as they prepared for - and during - the 17-day retrial.

Prison diary, page 15

Campaign to free the Pooh Five: a scandal that would rock Seven Acre Wood

He always considered himself a very ordinary sort of bear, but, as *Rosa Prince* reports, the whereabouts of Pooh sparked an international dispute when an MP who found him languishing in New York Public Library called for his return.

Americans have responded angrily to demands by Labour backbencher Gwyneth Dunwoody that the original Winnie the Pooh and his friends Piglet, Eeyore, Tiger and Kanga be repatriated to their homeland.

After finding the dolls sitting forlornly in the New York Public Library, Mrs Dunwoody tabled a Commons question to Chris Smith, the Culture Secretary, asking him to get the dolls back.

She said: "Just like the Greeks want their Elgin Marbles back, so we want our Winnie the Pooh back, along with all his splendid friends."

But the Mayor of New York City, Rudolph Giuliani, has vowed to keep the dolls in America. He broke off from his busy schedule yesterday to visit the exiled dolls at the West 53rd Street library. Accusing the Labour MPs of using "fightin' words", he said: "We will do anything we can to keep them here." Spokeswoman Colleen Roche added: "He just wanted to reassure the bear that he is safe on American soil."

There is speculation that Pooh's plight may even be raised at today's meetings be-



tween the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and President Bill Clinton. A spokesperson for the White House said: "We do not expect this to be on the formal agenda of the meeting between President Clinton and Prime Minister Blair although we would not exclude that it could come up in discussions."

The bear that would become Winnie the Pooh was bought from Harrods by author A A Milne in the early 1920s for his son, Christopher Robin. The other dolls joined Pooh over the years, although Kanga's baby, Roo, was lost by Christopher Robin in a Surrey apple orchard and the whereabouts of Wol the owl is unclear.

The dolls became models for artist Ernest H Shepard, whose beautiful line



drawings accompany the *Winnie the Pooh* books.

In 1947, Milne's American publisher spied the dolls in the corner of the author's living room and asked if he could take them

on a promotional tour of the US. The Pooh Five never saw England again.

The dolls were donated to the New York Public Library in 1987 and have been kept in a bullet-proof display case ever

since. They are seen by 750,000 visitors each year.

Ms Dunwoody said she was unfazed by the tough talk of the famously hard-line Mayor Giuliani. "I am happy to do battle

with the Mayor of New York, any day he likes ... he says I use fighting words - well I do. We want Winnie the Pooh back - and all his friends. This is where they belong, not in some stuffy glass case in New York."

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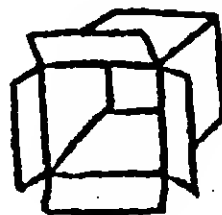
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Housing young people at risk

Four goals for healthier Britain could save 15,000 lives

Four targets for creating a healthier Britain were set out yesterday by the Government. But there are none to reduce the health gap between rich and poor, says Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor.

A total of 15,300 lives will be saved in 2010 if the national targets for reductions in deaths from heart disease, cancer and suicide set out by the Government yesterday are achieved.

The goals, published in a Green Paper, *Our Healthier Nation*, represent a 17 per cent cut in the 90,000 deaths a year that now occur among the under 65s, the target group. But this is more modest than expected, reflecting the difficulty ministers see in changing individual habits, social pressures and environmental influences. A fourth target is to cut accidents requiring a hospital visit from 10 million to eight million a year.



The Green Paper sets out the Government's plans for replacing the Tories' Health of the

Nation strategy, launched in 1992. That set 27 targets for improving health and although a majority have been or are about to be achieved, some will be

badly missed including those on obesity, teenage pregnancy and teenage smoking.

Ministers say that by reducing the targets to four, efforts can

be concentrated where they matter most. "If everything is to be a priority then nothing will be a priority," the document says.

There is no goal set for teenage pregnancies, a subject that Tessa Jowell, the public health minister, has signalled as among the most important indicators of social disadvantage.

Excess: Previous guidelines on obesity may be badly missed in the new Green Paper on creating a healthier nation
Photograph: Philip Meach

Four sentences in the 90-page document explain that because pregnancy rates vary so widely around the country, targets should be set locally "where appropriate". Teenage pregnancy is to have a separate strategy.

No national aim is set for reducing health inequalities and discussion of the problem is confined to three paragraphs. The Tories' Health of the Nation strategy, which was attacked for failing to make the link between poverty and ill-health, is criticised here for its "limited vision" and its "reluctance to acknowledge the social, economic and environmental causes of ill health".

HEALTH TARGETS

- Heart disease/stroke - reduce the death-rate among people under 65 by a third by 2010, saving 8,500 lives a year.
- Accidents - reduce accidents in the home, on the roads and at work by a fifth by 2010, averting 2 million accidents a year.
- Cancer - reduce the death-rate from all cancers among people under 65 by a fifth by 2010, saving 6,000 lives a year.
- Mental health - reduce the death-rate from suicide and undetermined injury by a sixth by 2010, saving 800 lives a year.

quity into health inequalities, chaired by Sir Donald Acheson, which is due to report in the spring, before deciding whether to include optional targets.

The absence of targets for reducing health inequalities drew the strongest criticism from health organisations last night. Kareo Caines, director of the Institute of Health Services Management said: "[Ministers] have peered over the precipice and drawn back a step or two. On this most crucial issue they have bottled out. Without measurable targets, even over a long timescale there will be less pressure for change."

Rabbi Julia Neuberger, chief executive of the Kings Fund, the health policy think tank, said: "We do have to measure progress in reducing inequalities, otherwise there is a danger that no one will take responsibility and be held to account."

Ministers say that the four national target areas of heart disease, cancer, mental health and accidents are all conditions which affect the poor more than the rich and measures to achieve them should therefore benefit the former proportionately more.

Responses to the Green Paper are invited up to 30 April.

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A shot in the arm for campaign trail

It is more than 20 years since the Government recognised that health could not be guaranteed by a health service. Diet and smoking, as well as Government policy in areas such as employment, housing and education had a greater impact than anything the NHS could achieve.

Over the past two decades repeated attempts have been made to improve public health and the difficulty of doing so is reflected in the uncanny resemblance between yesterday's Green Paper and those of the past.

In 1976, the then Department of Health and Social Security published *Prevention and Health: Everybody's Business* which highlighted what individuals could do to protect themselves from what were then known as "diseases of affluence" - heart disease and cancer.

It was followed by health campaigns in the Eighties, such as *Look after your Heart* launched by the Health Education Council, which today would be regarded as cannying. The *Health of the Nation* strategy launched by the Tory government in 1992 marked the most sophisticated development of this approach.

Its key weakness was its failure to acknowledge the link between ill health and poverty. But although yesterday's Green Paper makes that link it is notably cautious about how far the health gap between the rich and the poor can be narrowed.

Caution is advisable. The lesson of the past 20 years is that improvements in public health, while desirable, are extraordinarily hard to achieve. Some campaigns, such as on drug-taking and Aids, in the Eighties, have made matters worse.

Julian Le Grand, professor of health policy at the London School of Economics, said: "Given that public health is such a difficult and diffuse area and given our ignorance about what works and what doesn't I think the most we can hope for is small incremental steps. The only things we know work are locally targeted programmes."

DAILY POEM

From Late

By Michael Hamburger

A whole month of half-light,
January, before
A day, the last, breaks bright,
And the night sky, too, is lit
By a half-moon, unobscured,
Clear evening star.

Cock-crow again
Millennally sounds,
Blends with the softer calls
Of wood-pigeon, collared dove,
The long indigenous
And the recently settled.

Suddenly
The aconites clenched
Under snow, in the half-light,
Though the chill persists,
Tiny suns, respond
To the sun above,
Open their petals, shine.

Today's poem comes from the latest sequence by the poet and translator Michael Hamburger, born in Berlin in 1924, who came to Britain in 1933 and now lives in Suffolk. His many awards include the OBE and the Goethe Medal. *Late* is published by Arvil Press (£7.95).

The £50,000 bill to keep paedophile safe in a cell

The cost to the public of keeping the paedophile killer Robert Oliver in a police cell in Sussex has exceeded £50,000.

Ian Burrell reports on the dilemma of coping with such offenders.

Sex-offender treatment centres are refusing to take responsibility for Oliver, the killer of Jason Swift, who has been living in a police cell for four months. The public cost of looking after Oliver, who was hounded from town to town and sought refuge with the police in fear of revenge attacks by the public, has topped £50,000.

Officers from Sussex police, which is paying £400 a day from its budget for Oliver's keep, have been negotiating with various institutions to take the paedophile into their care. But none has been prepared to take the risk.

Last night Ray Wyrre, one of Britain's leading consultants on sexual crime, said it would be "political suicide" for any sex-offender programme to agree to take Oliver on.

"Nearly all the organisations I am in contact with have been approached to have him," he said. "But the trouble is that the media are going to pursue him and these projects cannot afford the politics of it."

He added: "They have probably had to reassure the local community that the people they are working with are not too high-risk."

Mr Wyrre said Oliver was part of a wider problem which involved more than 100 paedophiles who were convicted before 1991 and so are not

covered by the National Paedophile Register. Many of them are now being released back into the community without supervision. Mr Wyrre said the answer was to create long-term secure establishments which were something between a hospital and a prison.

Oliver, who was jailed in 1989 after being convicted of the murder of 14-year-old Jason, throttled and gang-raped in a flat in east London, first turned himself into police last October. He had been released a month earlier after serving most of a 15-year sentence but had been driven out of accommodation in Dublin, Swindon, London, Liverpool and Manchester.

He remains in the police station 24 hours a day and during the past four months has introduced some "home comforts" to his cell, where he is said by police to be happy.

At the new year Oliver agreed he would be prepared to move to a secure hospital and undergo psychiatric treatment. But no institution will have him.

Sussex police said: "We are trying to find accommodation that would be most suitable to him and, yes, it is proving difficult. We are not looking just in Sussex and we continue to seek a solution." The problem over Oliver coincides with growing concern over treatment for paedophiles in jails.

All sex offenders sentenced to more than two years are supposed to undergo a sex-offender treatment programme, which is available in more than 15 jails and is advanced compared to such services in other countries. But many serious offenders are being kept in jails where no such treatment is available.

Monsoon guru finds he's fashionable on the Stock Market



Rags to riches: Peter Simon, below right, the founder of the chain which sells clothing inspired by the styles and colours of the Far East

Photograph: Rul Xavier

'The image is in brown rice and cheesecloth ... Some doubt it can still be successful'

Peter Simon, the founder of Monsoon, found himself £88m better off yesterday when a quarter of his company was floated on the Stock Market. Tomsin Blanchard analyses the appeal of the fashion chain which epitomises ethnic chic.

It all started on a trip to India in the early Seventies. Peter Simon, a former fish-finger salesman, purchased some locally made garments, and brought them back to London to sell from his Portobello Road market stall.

The first Monsoon store opened in 1973 in London's Beauchamp Place, and since then Mr Simon has opened 179 Monsoon and Accessorize shops. Combining mod-

ern design expertise with traditional materials and techniques, the company has traditionally sold a range of colourful handprinted cotton clothing and other natural fabrics. One of the first best sellers was a shaggy coat made from the wool of a goat - a cross between a sheep and a goat.

But Monsoon has an image firmly rooted in the brown-rice eating, cheesecloth wearing days of the Seventies. Some people doubt whether it can be successful in today's minimalist fashion climate.

"Monsoon? It's for middle aged women who were once hippies," was one fashion editor's response when asked for an opinion on the chain yesterday. "Women don't want to look frumpy. Everything is shaped like a tent. The colours are wrong and the shapes aren't right," was another comment.

The sooty fashion cognoscenti however, have never been the core customer for Monsoon. A 32-year-old social worker,

Anne Maher, pops into her local branch from time to time to see what's new. Her most recent purchase was a necklace from Monsoon's sister chain, Accessorize. It was £8.99, what Ms Maher describes as "cheap and cheerful".

Indeed, the shops have a loyal customer base. According to a company spokeswoman, she is typically aged between 25 and 45. "She is a customer who is not a slave to fashion, who loves the colour and the individual look of Monsoon clothes. However ... we feel that we are increasingly able to attract the customer who wants a stronger, simpler, more fashionable look."

Monsoon is in a very strong position to move forward. As the merchandise in high street chains becomes increasingly interchangeable, it is Monsoon's very difference from the rest of the high street that the company should be exploiting.

Monsoon floatation, page 21



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Young choose life as New Deal offers escape from the dole

The New Deal will create a "get-up-and-go society", David Blunkett told Labour activists last night. Barrie Clement went to Wales to see how it may work on the ground.

Alan Evans began to "re-evaluate" his life when hunger forced him to pick up a chicken burger off the pavement. He was in Swansea at the time, or was it Bristol? Or perhaps Manchester? He can't really remember. Alan, 22, had dropped out of his degree course in French, German and Business Studies at the University of Wales in Swansea with alcohol and drug problems, made worse by a mountain of debt.

At first he lived with friends, but then lived on the streets. After months of wandering around western Britain, he went back to Swansea and entered a "foster" - a place of refuge for the homeless which attempts to rehabilitate them.

Now Alan is offering advice to other people who have hit hard times. He is one of the first participants in the Gov-

ernment's New Deal for jobless 18- to 24-year-olds. He has taken up one of the four options offered to young people who have been unemployed for six months.

He has opted to take up a job with a voluntary organisation - in this case the Citizens Advice Bureau - where he will also receive training.

The former student is critical of the lack of preparation among bureaucrats in Swansea for their role in piloting the New Deal. No one knows precisely what kind of day-release training he will receive as part of his employment - a stipulation of the programme.

Yet Alan is grateful for the chance and believes that other young people in his position will benefit from it.

Far to the west in Pembroke Dock, Dale Sinclair-Jones, 18, has been whisked off the dole to work as a trainee car mechanic. He left school with a handful of GCSEs and went on to gain qualifications in technology, but his ability to secure employment has been severely undermined by his profound dyslexia. Having endured months of boredom at home while drawing benefit, he entered the "Gateway" to the New Deal which evaluates

each young person's needs, his or her attributes and the kind of job they might want.

Dale was taken on by West End Motors, a small firm of car repairers for six months. For that period the company will receive £60 a week. Dale has recently been told that when the subsidy comes to an end the firm will continue to employ him and he now hopes to become a fully trained mechanic.

As part of the Gateway to the programme those with literacy and numeracy difficulties - and those with more serious problems - are given specialist counselling by people of a similar age to themselves. After up to four months participants will be expected to take up one of four options: subsidised employment; full-time training or education; a placement with the Government's Environment Task Force, or a job with a voluntary organisation.

As Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer says, there is no "fifth" option. Those who refuse to indicate their preference among the options, are compulsorily directed to one of them. If they refuse they can lose up to 40 per cent of their state benefit.



Wheels of fortune: Dale Sinclair-Jones, who has been whisked off the dole to work as a trainee car mechanic

Photograph: Phil Rees/Dragon

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Hattersley joins fight to shackle Murdoch

The Labour revolt against the press power of Rupert Murdoch was yesterday joined by Lord Hattersley, the party's former deputy leader. Anthony Bevis and Paul Gilman report on the demand for a tougher competition law.

The battle lines for Monday's Lords vote on the Murdoch amendment were strengthened with a warning from Lord Hattersley that the international media magnate posed a threat to democracy.

Lord McNally, the Liberal Democrat spokesman who once served as Lord Callaghan's parliamentary aide at No 10, has put down an amendment to the Government's Competition Bill, offering specific protection for newspapers threatened by the predatory pricing being run by Mr Murdoch's Times.

The Government has imposed a three-line whip against

the amendment, urging all Labour peers to vote against it.

Defying the whip, Lord Hattersley, a former director general of fair trading and a director of Mirror Group, which owns a 46 per cent stake in The Independent, has backed Lord McNally's amendment. Yesterday, he was joined by Lord Ashley of Stoke, who said: "I very strongly support it. I will be voting that way."

In a rallying cry in the London Evening Standard, Lord Hattersley said last night: "I shall be voting with the rebels in the hope of curbing the ambitions of a... tycoon who is a danger to our democracy. The sheer size of Murdoch's News Corporation... gives him more power than it is right for one man to enjoy. And his predatory instincts guarantee that given the chance, he will push on towards his dream of media monopoly."

"If that happens, we could save the expense and tedium of a general election by simply asking Rupert Murdoch which prime minister he would prefer to see in Downing Street."

Lord McNally has said that

the very existence of The Independent is threatened by the cut-price activities of the Times, which is also bleeding the finances of the Daily Telegraph.

Cabinet sources have told The Independent that ministers have been ordered by No 10 to do nothing to intervene in the press power-struggle. That would explain why ministers have said the present Competition Bill is adequate, while curiously arguing that they cannot be expected to anticipate its consequences.

But Lord Hattersley last night reminded Labour peers of Mr Murdoch's political track record. "He offers his deadly embrace to the party he expects to win the general election and then waits for the warm glow of gratitude to ingratiate him with the victorious government."

He said that in the 1992 election, Labour threatened to force Mr Murdoch to divest himself of one of his newspapers or abandon part of his television empire.

"Now it seems that new Labour is prepared to accept the Rupert Murdoch plan for domination of the British media."

Mutiny threat as big cuts hit poor

The Government faces a Labour mutiny over plans to cut £65m off the benefits of some of the poorest people in the country.

A cross-party alliance backed by more than 25 Labour MPs could force Harriet Harman, Secretary of State for Social Security, to drop a controversial proposal to penalise unemployed people claiming Jobseekers' Allowance.

As The Independent exclusively reported last month, the proposal has been condemned by the Social Security Advisory Committee, the official scrutineers of all welfare orders, who warned of the severe impact on a hard-pressed and vulnerable group, including the homeless.

The Jobseekers' Allowance (Amendment) Regulations, impose the benefit cut by extending from three days to seven the time during which no benefit claim can be made.

The Liberal Democrats' spokesman, David Rendel, was first to oppose the proposed statutory order but he was quickly joined by William Hague and other senior Tories - in spite of the fact that the proposal had been initiated by the last government.

Initially, Labour had opposed the Conservative plan, but Ms Harman now argues that the action is required to stay in line with Conservative spending plans.

It is already known that when the Cabinet reviewed last year's decision to impose benefit cuts on lone parents' child benefit, a number of senior ministers agreed that it would have been better - in retrospect - not to have done it.

Mr Rendel said last night: "The new rebellion threatens to exceed the revolt over the lone parent benefit cut, when 47 Labour MPs backed a Liberal Democrat vote."

He said the benefit cut was both unfair and unnecessary. A Commons motion tabled by Audrey Wise - the Labour MP who led last year's backbench revolt on lone parents' benefit - regrets that ministers are proceeding with the Tory regulations, and notes "that the Tory front bench has changed its position and is now opposing its own proposal, and therefore calls on the Government to withdraw these Tory regulations which even the Tories have now deserted".

— Anthony Bevis

Lib Dems get female shadows

Every one of the Liberal Democrats' 46 MPs is to have a female "shadow", the party announced yesterday.

Worried by his party's poor performance in getting women elected last May - the number went down from four out of 26 MPs to three out of 46 - Paddy Ashdown asked his women's spokesperson, Jackie Ballard, to set up the scheme. She has drawn up a list of the "key tasks" MPs perform, with answering letters at the top and speech-making in only fifth place. Each shadow will be expected to experience or observe each task over a six-month period.

The first six MPs - Ms Ballard, Norman Baker, John Burt, Simon Hughes, Andrew Stunell and Steven Webb - have begun their programmes.

Ms Ballard said the scheme would start by targeting women thinking of standing in elections for the Scottish and Welsh assemblies and for Europe. She said it proved the party was taking the issue seriously: "It is a big thing to ask of MPs, most of whom have quite well-developed egos, to have someone following them around and seeing what they do wants and all."

— Fran Abrams,
Political Correspondent

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Silicone breasts 'are safe'

Silicone breast implants do not damage the immune system and do not cause connective-tissue disease among women who have them, according to the latest study of one of the most vexed issues in medicine.

No good evidence has been produced that implants cause such problems, the *British Medical Journal* says, yet US manufacturers have paid \$4bn (£2.48bn) to women with them and in Britain the Department of Health has set up an inquiry, due to report in spring.

The new study found that the incidence of immunological disorders in 7,000 Swedish women with implants was no higher than in 3,000 women who had had surgery to reduce the size of their breasts.

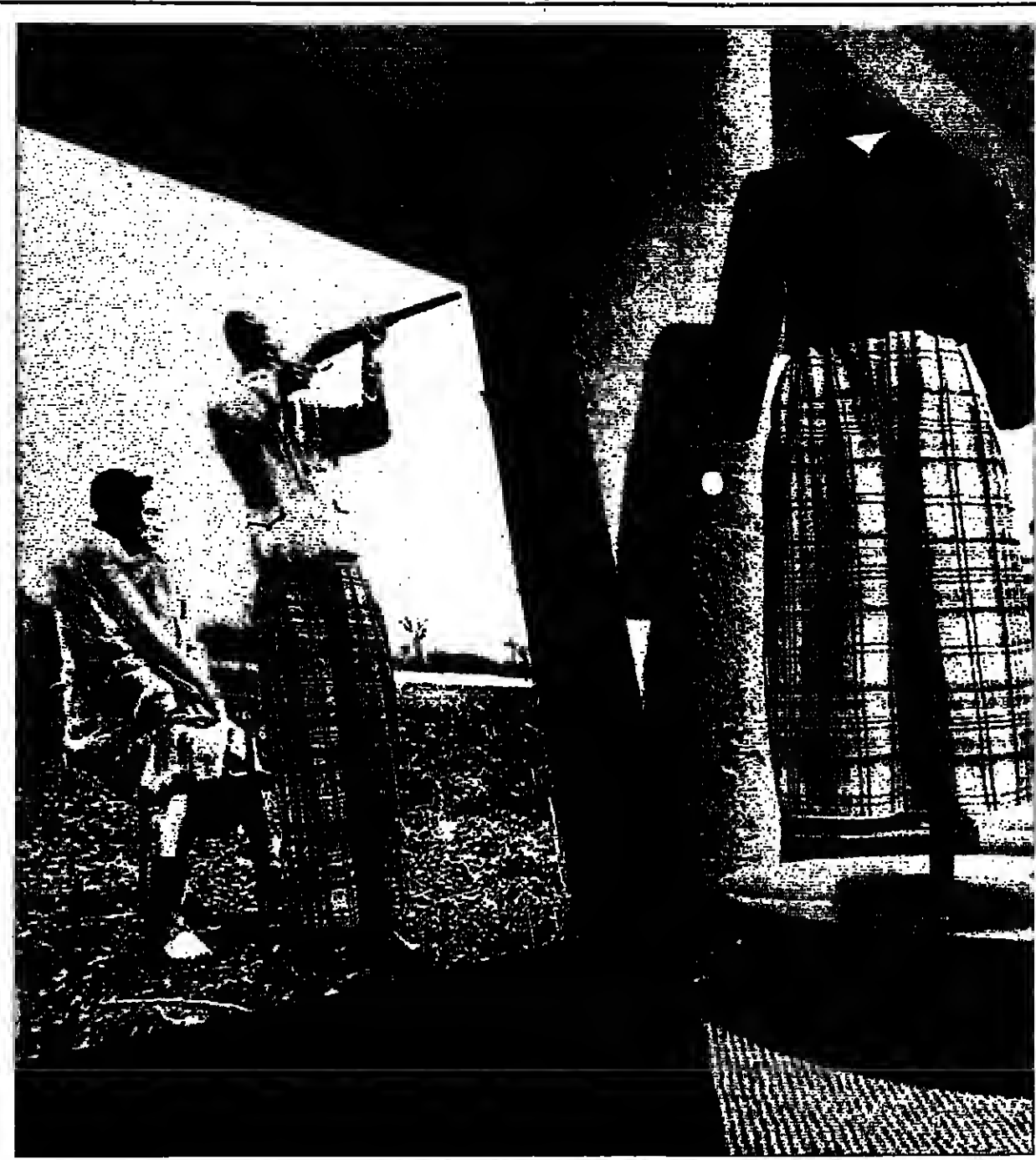
In an editorial the *BMJ* says the results add weight to the conclusion that implants are safe, although they are associated with less serious problems such as hardening and occasional rupture.

"It is difficult to see how epidemiological studies will shed more light on this," it says.

In a letter to the journal, three plastic surgeons question the granting of legal aid to a woman with silicone implants who claims they are to blame for her child's stomach cramps, skin problems and food allergies after breast-feeding.

The authors say silicone is used for teats for infant bottles and is a constituent of baby-milk formula.

— Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor



Bang-on: The Duke of Windsor shooting (left) and the trousers he was wearing (centre) on display in New York, some of the items from the Duke and Duchess's Paris home to be auctioned by Sotheby's Photograph: Reuters

Praise, not marks out of ten, seen as the key to school success

Teachers should stop routinely giving children marks or grades, London University experts said yesterday. Judith Judd, Education Editor, looks at startling new evidence on the best way to raise standards.

Marks out of 10 should be the exception rather than the rule. Brief remarks such as "could do better" and "satisfactory" should also be outlawed and replaced by detailed comments on how pupils can improve.

Competition and marking which compares pupils, such as gold stars or ranking, should also be abandoned because they make the least able give up. King's College researchers who reviewed the effect of teachers' assessment of 10,000 pupils from all over the world during the past decade found marking or "feedback" is more important than almost anything else in determining progress.

The study shows pupils who have the same teachers progress if they receive comments on their work but not if they receive only marks or even marks and comments.

Explanations of how pupils

could improve and what they need to learn next could raise standards by as much as two GCSE grades in each subject over the country.

Professor Paul Black, one of the researchers and architect of the proposals for the first national tests 10 years ago, said the present government tests, targets and league tables might be counter-productive.

Tests and targets do not in themselves raise standards, the study argues, and ministers need to focus on how children are assessed in the classroom. Dr Dylan William, head of the King's College school of education, denied their views meant a return to the progressive notions of the sixties.

Teachers would find it harder to give pupils a clear idea of how they could improve than to tick a pile of books.

They were not against national tests or giving pupils marks or grades once a term or once a year.

"But the place of marks needs to change. Too much emphasis on marks means pupils who are finding it difficult tend to give up."

The effect on able students could be equally unhelpful, he said.

Because they nearly always received high marks, they sometimes coasted. "I once gave the

cleverest kid in the class E for effort. His parents were not happy." Earlier this week, Chris Woodhead, chief inspector of schools, said marking was not tough enough in some schools and teachers were not using assessment results to raise standards.

Dave Anderson, head teacher of St Chad's Secondary School in Essex, who supported the findings, said he knew he had not always marked work as well as he should.

"I remember timing with colleagues how quickly we could get through a set of books. We focused on 'well done' or 'good effort' without ever explaining why it was good."

Prof Black said the change of direction called for in the study would not mean longer hours for overworked teachers. "This is about working smarter, not working harder."

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters' Union of Women Teachers, said: "I'm just pulling myself down from the ceiling. These people need to try out some of these crazy ideas in the classroom. Teachers would spend all their time assessing instead of teaching. Marks out of ten and percentages produce a much clearer picture for pupils and parents."

Advisers cross swords on a class improvement act

Inspectors yesterday described Birmingham local education authority, a testbed for many Government policies, as "a success story". But, says Judith Judd, Education Editor, the report from the Office for Standards in Education highlights a dispute between two senior government advisers on how to improve schools.

Five years ago, says the report, standards in Birmingham, one of the most deprived areas in the country, were low, teachers were demoralised and had no faith in the local authority.

Now, says the report, test and exam results are rising steadily, teachers are looking for solutions, not problems, and the authority is very well-run.

But the reasons for the improvement are being hotly debated. Professor Tim Brighouse, the authority's charismatic chief education officer, says there is "a conflict of

philosophy" between the report and the authority about how schools improve. The report from Ofsted, headed by Chris Woodhead, chief inspector of schools, says higher standards have more to do with Prof Brighouse's leadership than the authority's school-improvement policies. The two men are joint vice-chairmen of the Government's Standards Task Force.

While Prof Brighouse believes that Birmingham's success offers hope for all inner-city areas, the report argues that the city's approach does not provide a model for others, partly because of the chief education officer's inspirational leadership.

Prof Brighouse thinks that bad schools should be dealt with quietly and discreetly, whereas the report appears to support the Government's policy of "naming and shaming" schools. "It argues that the city 'will need to be more open about confronting failure'."

Prof Brighouse cites the authority's policy of setting targets for improvement as "a key ingredient" in its success. The report says the policy has little to do with success, because schools did not really understand how the targets worked.

Prof Brighouse said: "This is a really good report and it offers hope for urban areas. Whatever the odds, you can have tremendous rates of improvement if there is political will and good management."

"There is a wider debate about school improvement and there is a conflict of philosophy. It boils down to what is the right mixture of pressure and support for schools."

The report points out that, despite improvements, Birmingham's position in the national league tables remains low - 96 out of 131 at GCSE. It suggests that the authority needs to concentrate on the things it does well and that it may have embarked on too many initiatives.

Inspectors criticise the local authority's policy of asking schools to set targets to improve on their previous best. "Some schools ... were celebrating progress that was at best modest and, very occasionally, entirely spurious." One school hailed an improvement in its prospectus of almost 50 per cent in its GCSE results. This was an increase from 11.5 per cent, getting five or more top grades to 16 per cent, a difference of just nine pupils.

Calls to check prisoners for mental illness

Almost half the inmates who commit suicide have a known previous history of psychiatric illness, according to a report published today.

The study says that jailing mentally disordered offenders can worsen some conditions and prevent people from being properly treated. It describes locking up psychiatrically disturbed people as "inhumane".

The Penal Affairs Consortium, which represents 34 organisations concerned with the prison system, also calls for facilities to be set up at courts and police stations to test whether offenders are mentally ill.

The report, *An Unsuitable Place for Treatment*, says that 47 per cent or 28 of the 60 inmates who killed themselves in prisons in England and Wales in 1995/96 had a known previous psychiatric history. Last year, a record 70 inmates committed suicide in prisons in England and Wales.

The report recommends the setting up of specialist facilities to deal with mentally disordered offenders and defendants.

— Jason Bennett
Crime Correspondent

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Oprah faces a grilling for panning Texas beef

Two years ago the queen of television chat, Oprah Winfrey, asked the question: Could British mad-cow disease show up in the US? Little did she know her curiosity would land her in the dock of a courtroom in Amarillo, Texas. But that is where she was yesterday. David Usborne watched her testify.

Buster Bloods, the "Stud Host" at the "The Great Steak of Texas", is disappointed. Two weeks after she arrived for an extended stay in Amarillo, Ms Winfrey has still to show up. Apparently she has not been tempted by the restaurant's offer of a free 72oz steak for anyone who can eat it in 20 hours.

Given her well-publicised triumph over past weight problems, that may not be surprising. But you wonder why her lawyers

have not brought her here anyway. This, after all, is the Texas Panhandle, the epicentre of the American cattle industry. And in regard to beef Ms Winfrey has a something of a public-relations problem.

Her difficulties, and the reason she has spent the past two weeks in the imposing courthouse stems from an April 1996 broadcast of the ratings-topping Oprah Winfrey Show. It went out three weeks after the British government made headlines worldwide with the first clear admission of a possible link between beef consumption and the brain disorder Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD).

Ms Winfrey cannot have anticipated the consequences of that show, which featured guests debating whether the condition behind the panic in Britain, BSE, or "mad cow", risked surfacing in the US. In particular, she might not have invited on the set Howard Lyman, a former rancher turned vegetarian who argued that BSE was likely to show up on this side of the water.

If it hadn't already. And most certainly she would not, after Mr Lyman had uttered his most doom-laden words, turned to the studio audience and declared: "It has stopped me cold from eating another burger!"

That remark prompted ranchers across Texas to boast bumper stickers declaring: "The only mad cow in America is Oprah". More importantly, it led to a group of farmers to launch a lawsuit against her, her production company and against Mr Lyman.

Curiously about the case is intense for several reasons. It has put the country's second most successful black entertainer - after Michael Jackson - in the hands of a courtroom jury. Ms Winfrey has also been forced to bring her entire operation down from Chicago to continue taping her show every day from an empty theatre around the corner from the courthouse. And then there is the most unusual nature of the suit itself. It rests on a law recently introduced in this state, as in 13 others, that seeks to protect vegetables and animal products -

cows included - from slander or libel. This is the first time the food-disparagement laws have been put to the test anywhere in the country.

The suit is seeking \$10.6m (£6.6m) in damages on grounds that instantly after the Ms Winfrey broadcast, watched daily by 20 million US viewers, the price of cattle futures plummeted on the Chicago exchange because the show had fanned fears of latent BSE in US animals, even though no case has been recorded in the US.

Ms Winfrey is reminded of the task that she faces each morning as she walks into the courthouse.

The lobby is dominated by a colourful mural depicting what makes this region proud: handsome cowboys astride their horses corralling long-horned steers. But inside the courtroom to support her yesterday was the poet Maya Angelou and her boyfriend, Steadman Graham.

And Ms Winfrey has not, as it were, been cowed. Instead, she has defended her

reaction to Mr Lyman and her programme. "We are a talk show," she told the jury. "We present guests with opposing views. We believe that Mr Lyman believed in what he was saying."

Questions about how the programme was edited, after taping, may have weakened Ms Winfrey's defence. The jury has heard testimony suggesting that remarks countering Mr Lyman's view offered by a beef-industry spokesman, Dr Gary Weber, were unfairly pared down in the editing process. An editing assistant this week said he had been asked by Ms Winfrey to cut out the "boring beef guy".

When it gets the case, perhaps next week, the jury will face complex issues. Does Ms Winfrey, for instance, have a constitutional right to express whatever views she likes on her show? Or should she be mindful of the influence she has on her fans? And if she did err, is it reasonable to punish her for slandering not a person but a foodstuff?

Immunity doubts for Lewinsky

Kenneth Starr, the independent prosecutor investigating allegations that President Bill Clinton had an affair with a White House trainee, said yesterday that his inquiry was making "very significant progress". He would not confirm, however, that the woman, Monica Lewinsky, had been given a deadline to tell all she knew or face prosecution.

At the centre of the inquiry is a conflict between sworn denials of an affair from both Mr Clinton and Ms Lewinsky, and tape-recordings of conversations in which Ms Lewinsky appears to confirm it. Her lawyer has been negotiating for her to be given immunity from prosecution for perjury if she retracts her denial. The account she has offered so far - reported to be a confession of an affair but no confirmation that Mr Clinton tried to persuade her to lie about it - is said to be insufficient for Mr Starr to grant immunity.

Yesterday, the *Washington Post* printed a passage, said to be taken from Ms Lewinsky's account, which reads in a legalistic manner on the delicate ground between lying and not telling the truth. "Sources" are quoted as saying that Ms Lewinsky had asserted that she was not urged to lie, only to "tell a

certain version of events - one that did not happen".

This detail coincided with new evidence that someone may have witnessed the President and Ms Lewinsky in compromising circumstances. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that a White House steward with access to the Oval office had testified that he had seen the two alone together in Mr Clinton's private study and had then found "issues smeared with lipstick and other stains". The steward's lawyer immediately denied that this information had been contained in his client's testimony to the inquiry.

An earlier report that a member of Mr Clinton's secret service detail had caught the two in an intimate encounter was retracted by the *Dallas Morning News*, which said the second-hand account was "ambiguous".

The White House, meanwhile, continued to keep silent about the alleged affair and would not comment on reports that Mr Clinton was considering invoking "executive privilege". This permits a President to stop certain information getting into the legal or public domain so as not to jeopardise the relationship of trust between him and his advisers.

— Mary Dejevsky, Washington

'Vampire' leader murder plea

The 17-year-old leader of a vampire cult pleaded guilty yesterday to killing the parents of one of his cult members.

Just minutes into prosecutor Brad King's opening statement to jurors, Rod Ferrell's lawyer, William Lackey, said his client wanted to change his plea.

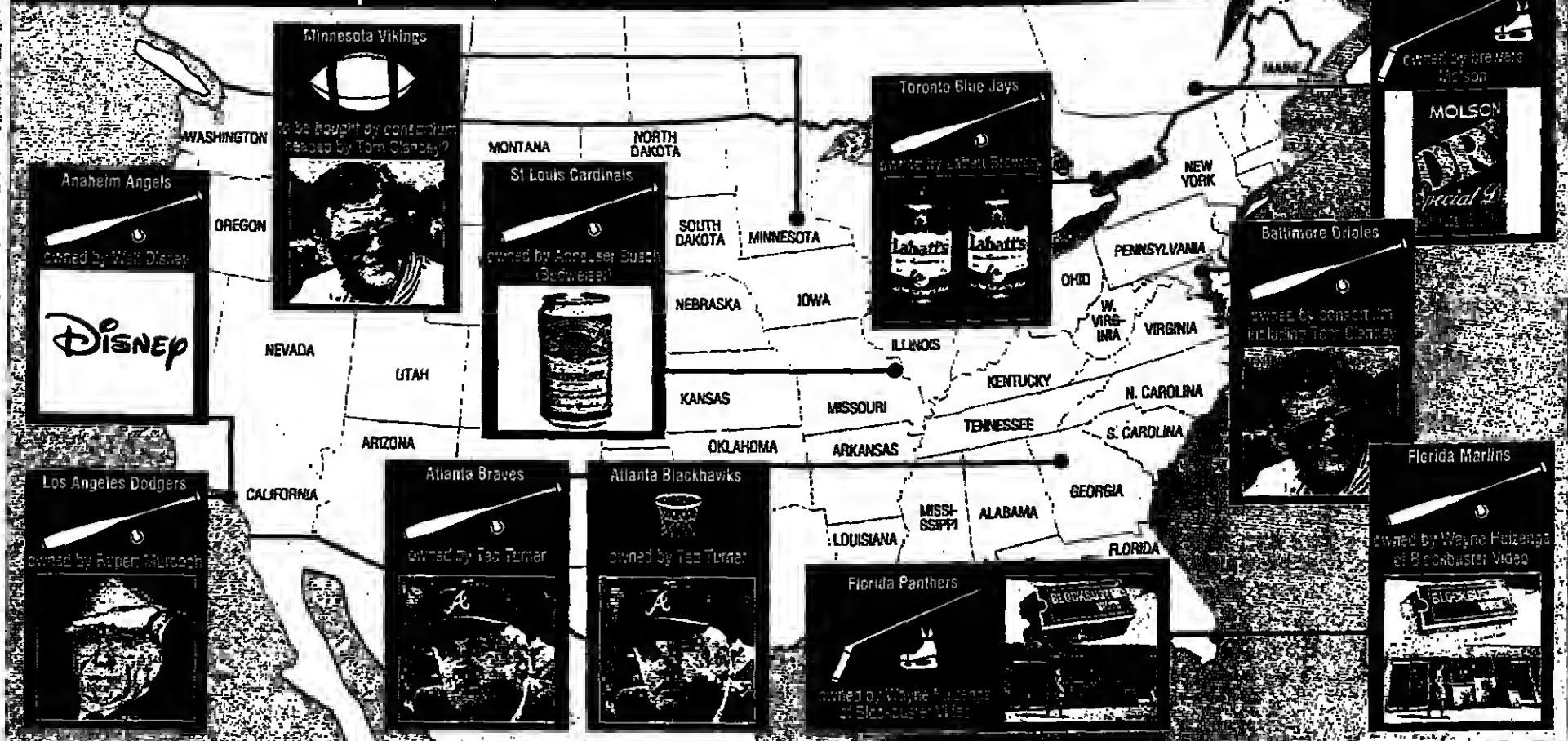
Mr Ferrell, who could face the death penalty, also pleaded guilty to armed burglary and robbery charges.

The teenager had pleaded innocent to two counts of first-degree murder for bludgeoning to death Richard Wendorf and Naoma Ruth Queen in November 1996, in their home in Eustis, Florida.

Mr Ferrell purportedly cut himself and sucked his cult members' blood. Court papers said that cult members would take drugs and have group sex.

— AP, Florida

The stars who own the sports teams



Tom Clancy joins the costly hunt for sports world kudos

The best-selling author Tom Clancy (estimated gross income for 1996-97 \$50m) is trying to buy the Minnesota Vikings football team. Rupert Murdoch asks why the fabulously rich and famous do such crazy things.

In America, Tom Clancy once proclaimed, "there ain't no excuse. You can go out and do anything you damn well please if you try hard enough". Like producing bestselling novels, or buying an NFL football team. Except he may find the latter an even tougher endeavor

than writing *The Hunt for Red October*.

Earlier this week it seemed a sure thing: Clancy, already a member of the ownership group of the Baltimore Orioles baseball franchise, had bid \$200m (£120m) for the moderately successful Minnesota Vikings, and the offer had been accepted. But Roger Goodell, the Vikings' President of the Vikings has matched the bid, and under NFL rules, in the case of a tie the incumbent wins.

So for Clancy, if he's going to do what he damn well pleases, either a bidding war or a legal war looms. Which raises the question: why do people want to own US football teams?

The answer is: for reasons not dissimilar to those which im-

pel otherwise sane businessmen to invest in what was once known as Fleet Street. Like British newspapers, American sports franchises are rarely profitable; indeed the underlying economics in both cases may politely be described as lunatic.

You pay a fortune (in Clancy's case the record \$200m). But to keep the fans happy, you need a winning line-up. So you commit yourself to a team payroll of \$73m (the 1998 Baltimore Orioles) or more. To get your money back, you watch out ticket costs and tell the local city fathers that unless they build you a state-of-the-art new stadium you will take the team elsewhere.

In the end the prime beneficiaries are not the fans but the players, among whom wages of

\$2m a year buys you a journeyman at best. For the owners the thrill are less tangible. Sometimes they amount to a sense of doing one's local duty. More often it is the gratification of becoming a local big-shot, and of being able to use the sports team as a flashy loss-leading brand for a business empire.

The feelings towards the Orioles of Clancy, born and bred a Baltimorean, must be presumed to fall into the first category. Not so some others. Altruism is a not a quality associated with Jerry Reinsdorf, owner of Chicago's baseball White Sox and basketball Bulls, or the Yankees' owner George Steinbrenner in New York. Steinbrenner's main claims to fame are sacking managers like

other people shell peanuts.

Probably the majority of US sports teams are still owned locally. Increasingly though, they are arms of the media multinationals. Ted Turner of CNN owns the Atlanta sports teams and Blockbuster Video's Wayne Huizenga the Florida Marlins and Panthers in Miami. Not to be outdone, Rupert Murdoch is

buying the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Occasionally, gentler traditions prevail. The Green Bay Packers are a co-operative owned by their fans. And the system works, for the Packers won football's Super Bowl in 1997 and were runners-up this year. With or without Tom Clancy, the Vikings need a miracle to come close to that in 1999.

Conservative Congressmen win the right to take a plane from JFK to Ronnie

President Bill Clinton will today sign an order renaming the capital's Washington National Airport after Ronald Reagan, his predecessor-but-one in the White House. The tribute was approved by both Houses of Congress earlier this week, ending a spirited and at times acrimonious debate that spilled over into newspaper columns and radio talkshows.

The congressional votes were rushed through so that the renaming would coincide with Mr Reagan's 87th birthday. The former president suffers from Alzheimer's disease and may not even appreciate the honour.

Mr Reagan joins the late President John F Kennedy and George Bush in having an airport named after him, but in his case there is a special irony. One of Mr Reagan's early acts as president was to sack more than 11,000 air traffic controllers who had refused an order to end their strike. Controllers at what has hitherto been known as Washington National Airport say they will refuse to call the airport by its new name in protest.

Democratic Congressmen are also baulking at using the



Honoured: Ronald Reagan, pictured with wife Nancy. An airport is being named after the former president

new name, but their Republican opponents say that fair's fair. They have long had to swallow hard before booking tickets to JFK whenever they travelled from Washington to New York. Now, Democrats will have a taste of their own medicine.

National Airport is the smaller and older of Washington's two airports and mostly receives domestic flights. It is favoured by travellers because it is close to the city centre, and the terminal building was re-

cently given a sparkling new glass extension.

Opposition to the renaming of the airport came not just from Democrats, but from a vocal coalition of people who felt that renaming buildings after politicians has gone too far, that changing all the signs will be expensive, or that Mr Reagan's name was already sufficiently commemorated. As well as an emergency medical centre, there is a Ronald Reagan federal building under construction

that will house government officials. The paradox of associating that building - an embodiment of big government which has overrun its completion date and budget - with a government-cutting president has been much remarked upon.

The most compelling argument brought by dissenters was that the Washington airport was already named after an individual - the first US President, George Washington. "Who was Washington then? Bugs Bunny?" was one of the more memorable lines from the Senate debate.

There followed a complex grammatical and semantic argument about whether the Washington of National airport referred to the city or the person.

For advocates of the change, the renaming reflects an affection and respect for the former president on the American right that continues to grow a decade after he left office. Mr Clinton, who shares with his predecessor the sure popular touch for which Mr Reagan is remembered, is expected to allude to that today.

— Mary Dejevsky

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12/IRAQ CRISIS

Cook seeks Gulf states backing for action against Saddam

Robin Cook tried yesterday to persuade leaders in the Gulf to back tough action against Saddam Hussein. Steve Crawshaw in Riyadh says he achieved some success after Saudi Arabia warned of dire consequences if Baghdad blocks UN inspectors' access to suspected chemical weapons sites.

The Foreign Secretary signalled that Britain's determination to embark on military action if necessary would not be deflected easily. "Saddam Hussein should not underestimate our resolve," Mr Cook said after talks with the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud. Mr Cook's talks in Saudi Arabia and later yesterday in Kuwait — where he met the Emir of Kuwait — followed hard on the heels of a similar visit by the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, whose message he had come to repeat and reinforce. "I am out in competition with Madeleine," he said.

In Baghdad, however, in what appeared a move to encourage Arabs to stiffen opposition to threatened air strikes, the Iraqi leader announced that all Arab prisoners would be freed "no matter what the crime". The number of prisoners and their nationalities was not immediately known, though it would presumably include all remaining Kuwaiti prisoners from the Gulf War. Kuwait says hundreds of its citizens are still missing from Iraq's 1990 invasion and seven-month occupation of the emirate.

The Saudis until now have been cautious



A 19-month-old Iraqi boy waits to be treated for malnutrition in hospital. A Unicef report said 30 per cent of Iraqi under-5s were malnourished as a result of economic sanctions. Photograph: AP

about the impact of air strikes. As the Saudi daily, *Arab News*, noted yesterday: "The danger is that US-led military action could give the Iraqi leader the kind of victory he is looking for. Let one bomb miss its target and kill civilians and the regime will have a propaganda coup with television pictures of the victims." But Mr Cook argued that the use of military force would damage the

Iraqi leader. "Saddam Hussein should not be under any illusions. If there is military action, it will be serious military action — and he will be hit hard... he therefore has more interest than anybody else in finding a diplomatic solution. He should do so while he still has time."

The Saudis came closer than ever before to supporting possible military action. The

statement from the foreign ministry said the Iraqi regime would bear responsibility for the "dire consequences" if there was a "failure to reach a diplomatic solution".

Most dramatically, the Saudis warned of the potential break-up of Iraq if President Saddam refuses to compromise. They insisted on the need for "unconditional compliance" with United Nations Security

Council resolutions and argued that the UN resolutions constituted "the only way to end the suffering of the Iraqi people and preserve Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity". That is as much a fear as a threat. Saudi Arabia sees the break-up of Iraq as a nightmare scenario, with implications for stability throughout the region.

Mr Cook described the latest Iraqi pro-

posals for ending the crisis as "interesting", but he insisted that they did not go far enough. In talks with the Russian special envoy to Baghdad, the Iraqis have suggested that UN inspectors will be allowed to visit 45 requested sites. But the terms of the offer remain unclear — for example, whether the visits would only be a one-off, and who would carry out the inspections.

Mr Cook said any proposals would have to be in writing: "There's a long way to go yet. United Nations inspectors must be free to carry out their inspections without conditions, and no sites labelled as out of bounds." The Foreign Secretary spoke for half an hour on the telephone to his Russian opposite number, Yevgeny Primakov, about Moscow's attempts to broker a deal with Baghdad. Mr Primakov's main message was: "Give me time."

Boris Yeltsin said yesterday that the worst was over in the Iraq crisis, though he repeated his warning, made on Wednesday, that a US military strike could lead to a world war.

The Saudis and Kuwaitis argue that they know better than most about the arsenal of terror, as documented by the UN inspection team. Britain is working on the tabling next week of a United Nations Security Council resolution, as a final non-military ratcheting up of the pressure on Iraq.

France to stay out of military action

France, one of the fighting allies in the 1991 Gulf War, made it clear yesterday that it would take no part in any new military action against Baghdad.

Hubert Védrine, the French foreign minister, told French radio that Paris would dissociate itself from any punitive air raids on Iraq undertaken by the United States and Britain. It would not even contemplate offering "logistical" help.

This hard line is supported across the political spectrum in France, from the pro-Saddam, far-right National Front to the instinctively anti-American Communists and Greens. The only dissenting voice has been the former Socialist prime minister, Michel Rocard, who said, in effect, that France was letting its allies down.

Why is France so sympathetic to Iraq? In part, Paris remains determined to build an alternative French, or if possible, European policy towards the Middle East. To maintain credibility with Arab capitals, it feels the need to distinguish itself from the US approach.

There is, undoubtedly, an element of commercial calculation. French firms have been

active in lining up possible contracts with Baghdad, once the UN embargo has been lifted.

But French politicians and officials are genuinely puzzled by the confrontational approach of the US, which they see as counter-productive. It is clear that the US will not allow normal relations with Iraq while Saddam Hussein is in power. French officials say. This removes any incentive for President Saddam to co-operate; it inevitably means that the US, and the UN, are placed in a relationship of verbal punch and counter-punch, leading eventually to fruitless military action.

If Iraq is bombed again, they argue, it will strengthen President Saddam. The Secretary-General of the French foreign ministry, Bertrand Dufourcq, was in Baghdad yesterday trying to find a diplomatic settlement acceptable to both Baghdad and the US. French officials say they believe that Iraq is shifting its ground, but they accept that President Saddam must acknowledge the fundamental principle of free access to all possible arms sites for inspectors of the UN's choice.

— John Lichfield, Paris

Dont spoil Olympics, says Japan

The Japanese government plans to ask the United States and Iraq to observe a United Nations-backed "Olympic truce" during the Nagano Winter Olympic Games which start tomorrow, its Foreign Ministry said.

Earlier this week, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called on all UN member nations to observe a truce during the Olympics. The White House said this week it was aware that any attack on Iraq during the Games would break the traditional Olympic truce, but said the United States government must make its own decisions.

— Reuters, Tokyo

China lines up with the Kremlin

China has warned the United States that it opposes military action against Iraq.

Qian Qichen, the foreign minister, yesterday telephoned Madeleine Albright, his US counterpart, and told her: "China does not favour the use of force against Iraq." He added that Peking was "quite uneasy" about the "increasingly deteriorating" situation with Iraq over weapons inspections.

Speaking on Chinese television yesterday, Mr Qian said: "China is extremely and definitely opposed to the use of military force because its use will result in... casualties and create more turmoil in the region and even could cause new conflicts."

China is one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council with the power of veto. In 1990 Peking abstained in the vote over military action against Saddam Hussein.

Mr Qian told Mrs Albright: "The Chinese side hopes that

the parties concerned would adopt restraint... and continue seeking the settlement of differences through dialogues."

Peking has also made it clear to Baghdad that Iraq must comply with UN resolutions requiring unlimited access to suspected weapons sites. China yesterday said it had sent a letter to Iraq's deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, demanding that Baghdad co-operate with UN inspectors.

Mr Qian is trying to co-ordinate China's position with Russia, whose deputy foreign minister is in Peking for talks today. A spokesman for the Russian embassy in Peking said: "Our views coincide... [on Iraq]. We want a peaceful solution."

Peking has made no secret of wanting to re-establish trade links with Baghdad. In 1996 China announced it was holding talks with Iraq to sign what it described as "massive" oil exploration contracts.

— Teresa Poole, Peking

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Small cheer: The Prince of Wales and Arthur C. Clarke. The accusations have cast a pall over the visit by the Prince, who leaves Sri Lanka today for Nepal

Photographs: Rex Features

Germany's jobless rate rises to 4.8m

On the day the unemployment rate hit a new post-war record in Germany, a jobless rally in Cologne, an industrial city of a million people, mustered 300 participants. More than 200 towns and cities were to be flooded by protesters inspired by the French movement. In the end, most were cancelled, owing to lack of interest.

"It's more difficult to organise anything here than in France," said Dietmar Koplow, who worked in a tractor factory until he was laid off last April. "Political consciousness in Germany is too feeble, and the unemployed are a bit shy."

The unions behind the day of action, to be repeated once a month until election day in September, had better luck in Berlin, where 3,000 noisy supporters besieged the local job centre. In Frankfurt, 400 people staged an occupation at the local welfare office. But crowds elsewhere were small and docile, as in Cologne, where most of the participants were leftist students anxious to hurry home from the cold. They circled the building once, set fire to an effigy, and dispersed.

In many towns, notably in Bonn, where the opposition and government clashed over the issue of unemployment, no one would volunteer to go out into the streets. From the organisers' point of view, things can only get better. Perhaps people will take notice when the magic figure of 5 million is breached, possibly next month.

With 302,000 more jobless in January than in the previous month, the headline unemployment figure stood yesterday at 4.82 million. The latest statistics also show the gap between east and west is widening.

— Imre Karacs, Cologne

Clarke hits back at press claims of paedophilia

Arthur C. Clarke's knighthood is on hold owing to accusations of paedophilia. But Peter Popham in Colombo says the furor has only mystified people in Sri Lanka, where he is greatly revered.

After stone-walling the British royal press pack all week, Clarke, the visionary science-fiction writer and alleged paedophile, turned up at the state banquet thrown for the Prince of Wales in Colombo last night and treated the invited guests to a persuasive exhibition of good spirits. "This is not Arthur Clarke, it's a clone," he told them when they cornered him sipping orange juice in a reception room in the President's house before the dinner.

"You know I can't say anything to you bastards - I am taking legal advice." He then declaimed the lines of verse by Humbert Wolfe: "I cannot hope to bribe or twist the British journalist but seeing what the man will do unbribed, there's no occasion to."

Asked about his investiture as knight, he said: "I am anxious to get the thing done as soon as possible." He recollected a previous meeting with the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1985, at the premiere of the film *2001*. Earlier Clarke had issued a press release repeating his denial of allegations last week by the *Sunday Mirror*. "Having always had a particular dislike to paedophiles, few charges can be more revolting to me than to be classed as one," it ran.

"As I have already said, the allegations are wholly denied. Indeed, the circumstances are such nonsense that I have found it difficult to treat them with the contempt they deserve. My conscience is perfectly clear."

Before the banquet he shook hands and exchanged pleasantries with Prince Charles. The Prince leaves Sri

Lanka today for Nepal, the next leg of his South Asian tour. There is speculation that he might find a quiet moment at Westminster House, the British High Commissioner's residence, to dub the writer before he departs. The Clarke saga has thrown a pall over the first week of the Prince's tour. In his novel *Rendezvous With Rama*, set in 2130, Clarke wrote: "It was a mild nuisance having two 'Sirs' on one small committee; in these latter days, knighthood was an honour which few Englishmen escaped."

But when announced in the New Year's Honours List, Clarke's knighthood seemed richly deserved after a lifetime of distinction in science, as well as science fiction. For honour to be tarnished, or even aborted, by allegations which many Sri Lankans found incredible, seemed all wrong.

According to the *Sunday Mirror*, Clarke was said to have admitted to having sex with boys who had reached the age of puberty. It was also stated that he played table-tennis with schoolboys "at a notorious pick-up haunt for perverts called The Otters Aquatic Club".

It is true that Clarke regularly goes to the Otters Club, but this description caused particular outrage in Colombo, as the club is a byword for middle-class respectability. Scepticism about the allegations increased during the week, not least because the writer responsible, Graham Johnson, was allegedly sacked from the *News of the World* for fabricating an encounter with the Beast of Bodmin.

In Sri Lanka, Clarke's reputation remains almost entirely intact. The *Mirror* story was reported only on one radio programme. Newspapers have carried nothing about the allegations. In the *Lanka Monthly Digest's* Golden Jubilee Special on the "Fifty greatest Sri Lankans since independence," "Sir Arthur C. Clarke," as he is styled, is the only foreign-born resident to be featured.

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German MPs huff and puff, and stub out smoking Bill

The German parliament yesterday rejected a Bill that would have placed strict limits on smoking in public buildings and the workplace.

After a heated two-hour debate, the Bundestag voted by 336-256 against the measure, which would have banned smoking in public buildings and public transportation. It would have also required companies to set up separate rooms for smokers.

— Reuters, Bonn

Little Mermaid charge

Michael Poulsen, a TV cameraman, was detained for 13 days pending investigations into charges that he decapitated Copenhagen's Little Mermaid statue; he was charged with causing malicious damage to public property. He was first to film the statue after it was vandalised a month ago. He pleaded not guilty and lodged an appeal against the ruling. Police said they suspected he carried out the beheading with the help of unknown accomplices.

— Reuters, Copenhagen

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Ancestors of the tin snail crawl out from a French barn and go on display

Like rediscovered dinosaurs from an automotive Lost World, three ancestors of the Citroën Deux Chevaux, mislaid for nearly 60 years, will go on show in Paris today.

The cars, complete with the corrugated bonnets and flimsy deckchair seats are the first pre-production models of one of the great icons of post-war France.

They were built in 1938, 10 years before the cheap, low powered French answer to the Volkswagen Beetle - TPB, *Très Petite Voiture* - reached the public. When the Second World War broke out in September 1939, the cars were hidden under bales of straw in a barn near Chartres to prevent the technology falling into enemy hands. (It may seem unlikely that the Wehrmacht would have coveted the Deux Chevaux, but it was classified as top secret at the time).

Three years ago the cars were unearthed, filthy, their bonnets stowed in by the weight

of the bales, but intact. They will be the *pièces de résistance* at *Rétromobile*, a 10-day exhibition of classic French and foreign cars which opens today at the Port de Versailles in Paris.

The Deux Chevaux, also famous, or infamous, for its canvas roof, dashboard gearshift and infuriating folding windows, ceased production in France in 1988 and in Portugal in 1990.

Seven million were produced over 40 years. The original brief of the Citroën designers in 1935 - two years before the first VW Beetle - was to produce a car to convert rural France from the horse-cart. More precisely, the intention was to devise a low-price car "capable of transporting two farmers in clogs, 50kg of potatoes or a barrel of wine at 60 kilometres an hour, consuming three litres of petrol for every 100 kilometres". Aesthetic considerations were "of no importance".

The production models of

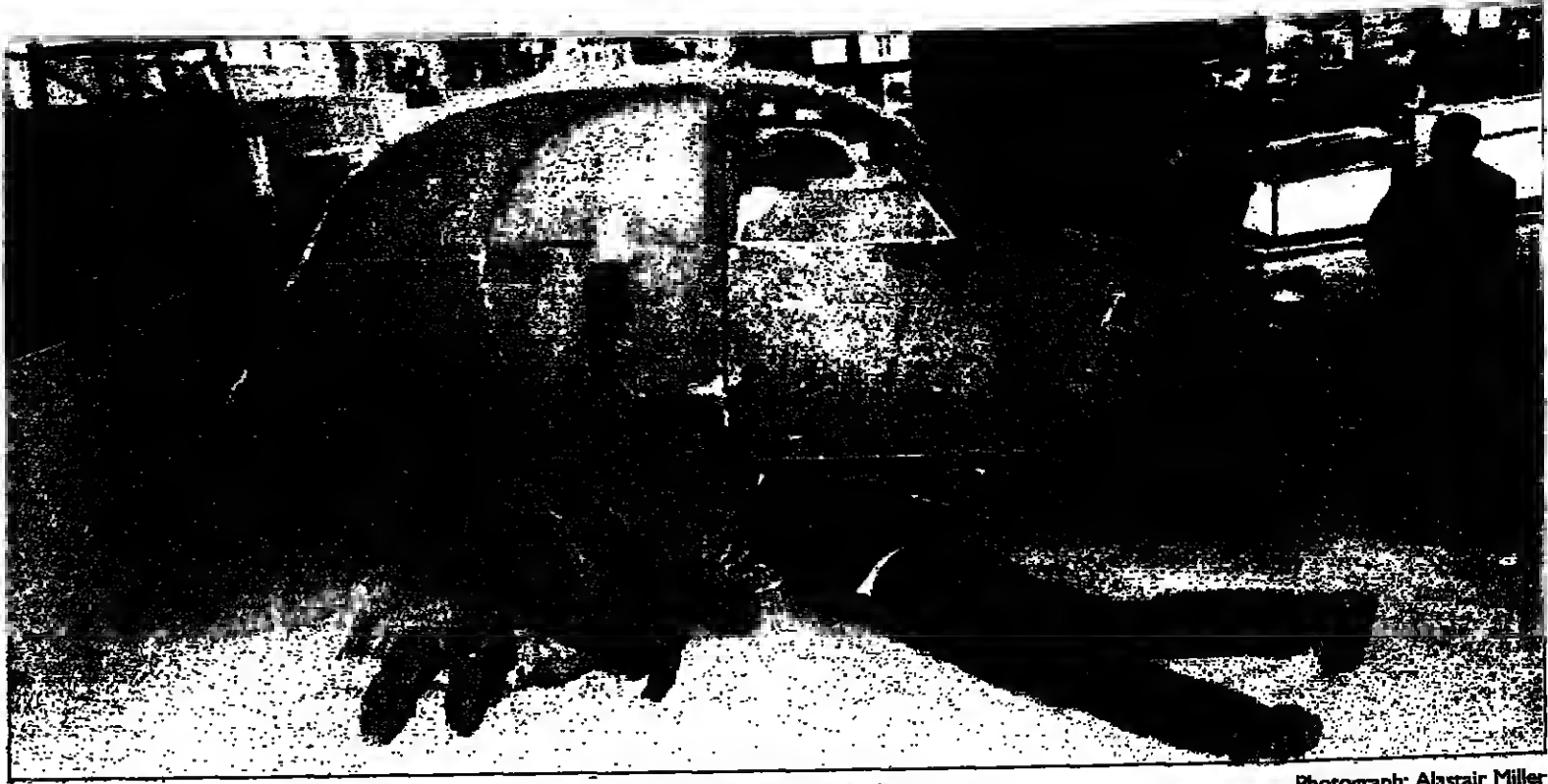
the 2CV exceeded these targets, in terms of petrol consumption at any rate. With care, the car would give well over 50 miles to the gallon, one of the most economical vehicles ever made.

It was, however, never very comfortable at anything more than 50 mph and its death knell was sounded by the building of autoroutes in France from the 1970s onwards. Thousands survive in the French countryside but they are becoming an increasingly rare sight.

No attempt has been made to restore the rediscovered prototypes in working order; they will be displayed just as they were found.

Another 2CV was unearthed, in pieces, at the same farm, close to an old Citroën test track, several years ago. This was a survivor from a small production run, built in 1939. This car was restored and is now running around with its original two-cylinder engine.

— John Lichfield, Paris



Going nowhere fast: Three vintage pre-production Citroën 2CVs, on display in Paris

Photograph: Alastair Miller

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Anger grows in Italy over skiers killed by US aircraft

Initial shock over the horrific accident caused by a low-flying US military aircraft at a Dolomites ski resort is quickly turning to fury over the presence in Italy of the planes which have been an irritant for years. Andrew Gumbel reports from Rome.

Americans have agreed to co-operate; a special US Marines investigating committee, which began work yesterday, is being joined by an Italian air force colonel as an observer, and the Aviano base has been opened to Italian civilian prosecutors.

But in practice it is far from clear who has jurisdiction over what. On Wednesday, the Italian prosecutors attempted to question the pilot and crew of the Prowler but were told the four men had decided to remain silent. The Americans, meanwhile, have made it clear they want to carry out their own investigation first - leaving open the question of whether the four men would ever be allowed to come to trial in Italy.

The Italian government sharply increased pressure on the United States yesterday to admit responsibility for the deaths of 20 skiers whose cable car in the Dolomites resort of Cavalese was knocked to the ground by a low-flying US military training aircraft.

As stunned and angry locals mourned the dead at a memorial service in the parish church, there were signs of growing tension between the two countries over the cause of the accident and the appropriate way to apportion responsibility for the investigation.

Italy's defence minister, Beniamino Andreatta, told a parliamentary defence committee that the aircraft, a EA-6B Prowler being used to back up Nato peace-keeping operations in Bosnia, had deviated by as much as six miles from its flight path and was flying so far below the minimum altitude that it actually dipped beneath the cable-car cord that it severed with the tip of its tail-wing. "If the aircraft had stuck by the rules, there would have been no accident," Mr Andreatta said.

The allegation that the aircraft had left its flight path was flatly denied by General Guy Vanderlinden of the Marines in a news conference at the US air base at Aviano. US officials also took issue with the minimum altitude for low-flying missions cited by Mr Andreatta and others, suggesting the limit was as low as 80m.

In principle, the Italians and

Americans have also turned considerable anger on their own government. The provincial council in Trento has published a letter from Mr Andreatta in December 1996 explaining that low-flying exercises were an essential part of military training and that inhabited areas could not be avoided because Italy was too densely populated.

America's image has been tarnished further by the Clinton-Lewinsky sex scandal. "Down with Clinton, you're just a womaniser and a warmonger, a prostitute to power and war," was the reaction of one priest in Cavalese, Don Tommaso Volcan, as he first saw the mutilated bodies and twisted metal on the snow-covered slopes near his church.

The Americans are not the only scapegoat, however. The Italians have also turned considerable anger on their own government. The provincial council in Trento has published a letter from Mr Andreatta in December 1996 explaining that low-flying exercises were an essential part of military training and that inhabited areas could not be avoided because Italy was too densely populated.

Quebec goes in search of new (French-speaking) blood

Give me your huddled masses, yearning to have jobs and wide open spaces. Must be young, French-speaking and well-educated. Knowledge of ice-hockey an advantage.

This is the message which the Quebec immigration minister, André Boisclair, will bring to France next month when he leads the province's first ministerial recruitment drive in the mother country.

Mr Boisclair will visit Paris and several French regions to encourage young people to come to Quebec in a three-year plan to boost immigration. Belgium,

Switzerland, and Franchophone North Africa will also be targeted, but Quebec is especially keen to increase French migration, now only 2,000 a year.

Quebec has 10.4 per cent unemployment, not much better than the rate in France. But it also has one of the lowest birth rates in the developed world and an ageing population. The Quebec authorities are determined to maintain a majority of French-speakers, partly for cultural reasons, partly to keep alive the dream of eventual separation from Canada.

— John Lichfield

هَذَا مِنَ الْأَصْلِ

'If I had been sent back to prison, I would have died'

Sheila Bowler was a respectable middle-class piano teacher - until she was wrongly accused of murdering an elderly aunt. She tells *Grania Langdon-Dow* how four years in prison shook her middle-class sensibilities to the core.

As Sheila Bowler stood in the dock at the Old Bailey yesterday awaiting the verdict of her retrial for murder, she shook in terror. "The jury looked very solemn. I glanced across the courtroom at my daughter and she was in tears. Then they said 'Not Guilty' and all grinned at me. I was weak with relief."

When her confused and elderly aunt wandered into a Sussex river and died in 1992, Sheila Bowler's life became a nightmare. A 68-year-old widow whose life revolved around her family, her piano teaching and her home town of Rye, Sheila was found guilty in July 1993 of murdering 89-year-old Florence Jackson. She lost her first appeal in May 1995 and served four years of her minimum 12-year life sentence before judges at her second appeal last summer ordered the retrial and released her on bail.

The case hinged on whether Aunt Flo could have walked unaided to her death in the River Brede in East Sussex after Sheila had left her alone in the car while she went to get help with a flat tyre. Yesterday the jury decided it was possible and cleared Sheila of pushing her aunt into the river. Her motive for killing Aunt Flo, whom she had cared for without complaint for years, was said to have been greed - the £252 weekly cost of Aunt Flo's nursing home was supposedly whittling away the value of the flat the aunt had left to Sheila in her will.

As Sheila resumes her life in the three bedroom house overlooking Rye, which she and her husband Bob bought 50 years ago, it is only the bag stamped HM PRISON SERVICE blocking a hole in the greenhouse roof that gives any hint of the 1,475 days that she spent as prisoner TV3389.

She is still bemused how she could have changed overnight from respectable widow to callous murderer. The *Daily Mirror's* headline, "The aunt, the black widow and a murder most English", summed up the coverage when she was sentenced. "I can't believe now how stupid I was to think prison was an impossibility. I felt the whole

time during my arrest and first trial that what was happening was unreal and nothing to do with me. I knew I hadn't done anything and, in my blind faith in the legal system, I just thought it would soon be over."

She was so confident that when she went to see a barrister to discuss suing the hospital where her husband had died unexpectedly after routine surgery in 1992, she only mentioned in passing that she was facing "a bit of legal bother". The barrister was horrified when she told him she had been charged with murder.

It was that very detachment that helped confirm her as a cool, calculating killer in the eyes of the police and the jury. Too blunt and emotionally buttoned up for her own good, her case divided opinion even in her home town.

Prison shook her to the very core of her middle-class sensibilities. She remembers with painful clarity being driven to Holloway in a taxi, squashed between two prison officers. She was not allowed to say goodbye to her children - Simon, now 31, a customs officer, Jane, three years his junior and a talented cellist, 51. On arrival, she was strip-searched, warned not to trust anyone, and sent to a dormitory on the psychiatric wing, automatically designated



End of the ordeal: Sheila Bowler, above, with her daughter Jane and, below, Aunt Flo whom Sheila was accused of killing Emma Boon/KNP

used to. She states she finds it difficult to accept staff, some of whom are half her age, telling her when to get up, when to eat, etc."

Sheila quickly slipped into prison slang - talking of women "crutching" drugs (hiding them inside themselves) during visits, "squat searches" over a mirror during strip searches and "room spins" (searches). She was called "bloody murderer" when she first arrived at Bullwood Hall, a top security prison in Essex, to serve the first stage of her sentence. But the other inmates, most a third her age, soon nicknamed her "Supergran" after seeing her jog 21 times round the nethall courts.

Her daughter, Jane, says: "Mum will hate me saying this but she did become quite institutionalised. We used to visit and she would be so busy telling us about what she had been doing. Simon used to come away really angry, saying 'she doesn't care about us'. But it was just her way of coping."

Sheila threw herself into cleaning the chapel, organising the library or handing out refreshments during visits, railing against the administration and the slackness of the other inmates in her diary. Her personal officer wrote at one point, "Sheila regards her peers as naughty schoolchildren and she misses the stimulation of the intellectual conversation she is so

having been left comfortably off by her husband, she does now. Most of her savings went on her case. But the £18,000 from the sale of Aunt Flo's flat last year went to relatives because of her conviction. "And some of them had never even bothered to send Flo a Christmas card," she says pointedly.

Those lost years behind bars continue to exact a price. While very close to her mother, Jane is moving to Scotland to rebuild her life after putting her career on hold to fight for Sheila's freedom. "I wish I had her strength," says Jane sadly. "I had such a happy childhood in Rye but I can't bear it now - the gossip was really malicious."

Her mother, on the other hand, strides round Rye, unconcerned by the sideways glances. "It won't be long before they have someone else to gossip about," she says wryly.

Once released on bail, her pension was restored. But the conviction cost her about £52,000 in lost income. She will now seek advice on whether she can claim compensation. It is ironic that, while Sheila did not need Aunt Flo's legacy,

the words "Not Guilty". "If I had been sent back to prison, I would have died there."

Despite her horror of prison, she went back to Holloway to visit friends. "I know how much visitors mean. Some women had no one. My experience has certainly made me more understanding about what can happen to people."

When she was released last summer, Jane immediately asked for her clothes to wash - "they smelt of prison," Jane remembers with a shudder. All Sheila wanted was to sleep in her own bed, have a bath in peace, and walk beside the sea.

Once released on bail, her pension was restored. But the conviction cost her about £52,000 in lost income. She will now seek advice on whether she can claim compensation. It is ironic that, while Sheila did not need Aunt Flo's legacy,

A PRISON DIARY

Holloway, Monday, 12 July 1993: when the word "Guilty" was pronounced in court, my only feeling was disbelief... Charles Byers and Emma Kerr [her lawyers] came down to the dock to see me. The best Byers could think of [to say] was "At least you won't die in there."

Monday, 6 September 1993: I could weep at the sad spectacle they [the other prisoners] presented yesterday in chapel. Most of them are between 17 and 23 - most on drugs and many with several children. I have never seen such a dejected group of human beings. They are here for minor offences (apart from drug-dealing) such as non-payment of poll tax or TV licence. No way should they be locked up... it only magnifies their deep sense of guilt and inadequacy.

Tuesday, 7 September 1993: Can always find things to do but nothing takes away the immense feeling of solitude and rage I feel. Do wish I didn't feel so miserable when I wake in the morning. It's not so bad once the day gets going. Motivation is so difficult to keep going and it is only nine weeks since I came here. It might as well be 9,000 weeks.

Wednesday, 22 September 1993: A really nice officer let me have a bath at 4.30 today. Then she said I could sit and watch TV. What a treat to see a bit of news uninterrupted. She didn't lock me in until 8pm. It was so peaceful - I felt almost human again.

In November 1993 Sheila was moved to Bullwood Hall in Essex, one of two high security women's prisons.

Tuesday, November 9 1993: [The wing] is ghastly - 12 mini-rooms each about 12ft high and only 9ft by 8ft. It is cold - the walls are cream-painted brick - and there is constant piped music... horrible feeling of claustrophobia. Window in my room is 6ft from the ground and that is the only daylight.

Wednesday, 15 December 1993: Wing being decorated. Can't understand how people can be so jolly. Maybe if I wasn't here for life I would feel differently... 7pm: just heard my tariff is 12 years. What a Christmas present!

Tuesday, 22 February 1994: "Really looking forward to darling Jane's visit this afternoon and she was so miserable and unhappy - perhaps because she was alone and didn't have to keep up appearances. How does God expect me to bear this pain and anguish?"

Sheila returned briefly to Holloway for her first unsuccessful appeal in April 1995.

Monday, 10 April 1995: The journey to the Court of Appeal took only 20 minutes though I felt lucky to get there at all because the hassle of getting out of this place was incredible. Nobody remembered to wake me, though of course I was up. Two pieces of white bread were pushed through the hatch with marmite, two sausages and a tea bag, sugar and no water. At 7.30am I was taken to reception down four flights of stairs and subjected to another strip search - hrr up and pants down - talk about, humiliating.

Sheila was transferred to Holloway in May 1996.

Saturday, 3 August 1996: I am writing this at 10am. We have been locked in since 12.15 yesterday and we discovered this morning that the cause is a missing pair of scissors... you can imagine the racket being produced from all the rooms - screaming, shouting, banging of windows, sheets and clothes of all sorts being sent out of the windows afloat. We were told at breakfast that the last time something was missing all inmates were locked in for four days.

Soon after this, despair set in and the diary stopped.

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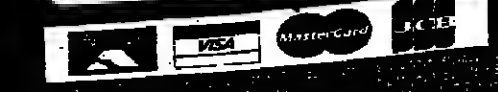


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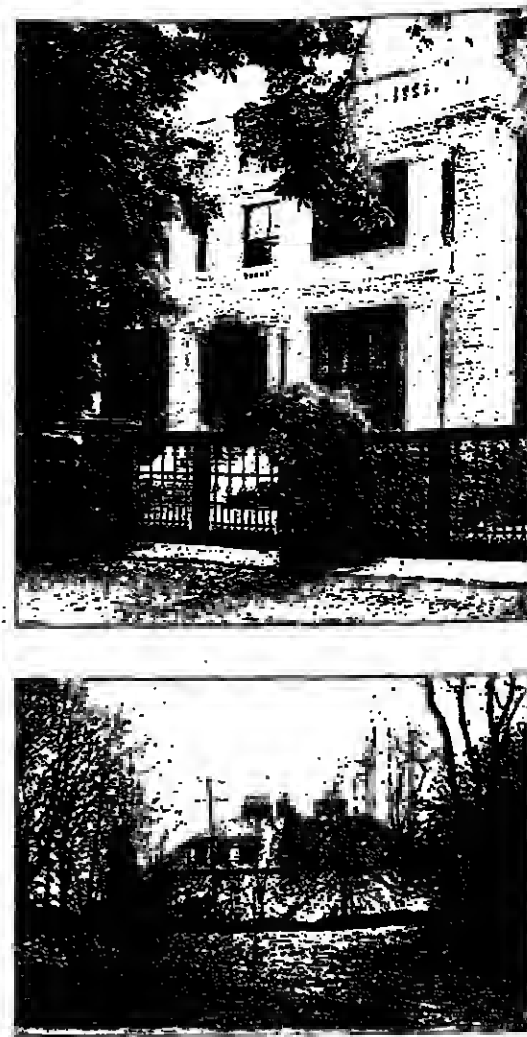
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Champion of the sensible work ethic: Gerry Robinson likes to paint at his house in Donegal, bottom right. He has decided his London home, top right, is now too big Philip Meach/Trevor McBride



Why office affairs should always be clandestine

You might think furtive lovers should be offering up thanks this week after news that major companies in the US have relaxed the rules on romances between workers.

In reality the secretive Romeo and Juliets will be dismayed. So much fun has been taken out of life already that legitimising the office affair is the last straw. Neither will their co-workers be pleased. Witnessing the clandestine office affair is one of the few reasons why we still brave the horrors of commuting rather than working from home.

On Wednesday the *Wall St Journal* surveyed major US companies and found that while in the past they had banned managers from dating subordinates, many major companies are now changing the rules to accommodate love.

For most of us in this country, though, the office romance continues to be fraught with difficulty, and thus the allure remains: the recruitment consultancy Office Angels estimates that 50 per cent of people meet their future partners at or through work.

Do we really want businesses to accept that affairs will happen – and indeed by doing so encourage them? Can the affair really survive that sort of respectability?

Imagine, in those first heady days of romance, admitting reality into that idyllic world by skipping hand-in-hand to the boss announcing your intention to date: fretting about causing problems with the "chain of command" before realising that your partner's habit of throwing their clothes on the floor drives you nuts; business meetings proceeding with minutes, any other business, and a list of who's snogging who.

To be frank, what is the point of investing in filing cabinets if not to steal kisses behind them? Why were electronic message systems ever invented if not to make clandestine assignments which involve each partner leaving the office exactly five minutes after the other?

But more important than the lovers' feelings is the amusement provided for fellow colleagues. In these days of insecure working conditions, there are few perks of the job. And one of them is definitely torturing and snooping on the lovelorn.

Can you imagine the delight of Robin Cook's colleagues, once they found out Gaynor was having to wait in his darkened flat for hours to outwit the Secret Service? And how many sniggering references to looking at legal briefs did the young Tony Blair and Cherie Booth have to endure in Derry Irvine's chambers?

The fact the British work the longest hours in Europe is thus explained: they're not there to work, merely to bug the lovers' phones.

Glenda Cooper

Quite ruthless – until it's time to go home

He split blood when he arrived at Granada and may be about to do the same at the Arts Council. Gerry Robinson is used to playing the shark ... but come 5 o'clock it's hat on and back to the wife and his other, more sedate, life.

There are two Gerry Robinsons. One is the head of two major British companies who is respected and feared in equally large measure by all who work with him. The other is a man who likes to leave work at 5pm for his wife and children and who dreams of retiring to his birthplace in Donegal.

Gerry Robinson, perhaps best known as chairman of Granada, Britain's biggest television programme maker, this week came under fire from shareholders for receiving £374,000 in a service contract deal. It cannot be a sum that matters much to him, since he also happens to be chairman of BSkyB and sits on the board of The Savoy. Until last year he was chairman of ITN. In May, he takes up a fourth executive position, as chairman of the Arts Council.

With so much work on his hands, colleagues and onlookers often ask how he manages to keep his personal life high on his list of priorities.

"He has made no secret that he values his family life," an insider at Granada said. "He is champion of the sensible work ethic. He says he makes 30 vital decisions a year

and if he can get those right then that's what really matters. He is the strategic thinker – he doesn't get involved in the minutiae of Granada.

"The story about him putting his top hat and tails on at 5pm every day is a bit of an urban myth that he is happy to have passed about. If the hours have to be put in then he will do it. But his view is that it isn't the hours you spend in a job but the worth of those hours. You have to strike a balance. He is very much wedded to his family."

The Granada chief, who is 49, has always said he will retire at 55 and return to his birthplace in Ireland. He grew up in Dunfanaghy in Donegal, the ninth of 10 children to a village carpenter. He was christened Gerrard Jude Robinson because he was born on 23 October 1948, between St Gerard's and St Jude's days.

He now has a house in Donegal, living there for up to eight weeks a year, while away the days of painting. He spends his money on what is important to him: a year ago while holidaying in Ireland, he was swamped with inquiries from Irish roofers after cashing in £525,000 worth of shares, explaining that he needed the money for repairs to his Donegal home.

Robinson has come a long way since he and his family moved across the Irish Sea. His family settled in the East End of London and the young Robinson entered the seminary of St Mary's College in Lancashire. He left with eight O-levels and four A-levels but had lost the urge to join the

priesthood; instead, he got a job sucking pictures of Matchbox toys into a catalogue. Ten years later he was taken on by the entrepreneurial group Lex Service before joining Grand Met. By the age of 35, he was head of Coca Cola (UK).

He made his own, multi-million-pound fortune in catering (which later earned him the slur "ignorant upstart caterer" from the comedian John Cleese when he entered the TV business) following a management

BY MARK ROWE

buy-out in 1988 of Grand Met's contract catering division.

His charm has not always worked. There have been a few notable stand-offs. Perhaps the biggest was after his arrival at Granada as chief executive in 1991, having been recruited over breakfast at Claridge's by Alex Bernstein, then executive chairman. Among the prominent people to fall swiftly on their swords were David Plowright, the distinguished programme-maker and Lord Olivier's brother-in-law. "I asked people what they did, and they kept going on about *The Jewel in the Crown*. But that had been made 10 years ago," Robinson said. Other redundancies followed,

prompting Labour, then in opposition, to call for Granada's franchise to be withheld.

Granada's takeover of the Forte hotels empire in 1996 also required the stomach for a battle, prompting Olga Polizzi, Lord Forte's daughter, to call Robinson and his colleagues "bastards". It was to no avail: Granada took Forte, and with it every Little Chef in the UK, as well as the George V hotel in Paris.

For the present, Robinson lives in a luxurious detached Victorian house in Addison Road, in Holland Park, an exclusive part of west London where the seriously rich rub shoulders and a number of embassies also have their homes. The house, which contains seven bedrooms, six bathrooms and four reception rooms, also offers an "in and out" carriage drive, indoor swimming pool, a staff flat and a west-facing 100ft garden, where Robinson also pursues his painting passion. Neighbours include Paul Allen, a partner in Microsoft, Sir Elton John and the Virgin chief Richard Branson.

He shares the house with his second wife and former secretary Heather and their children, April and Tim. The house is on the market for £8m.

A spokesman for Mr Robinson, who also has two grown-up children, Samantha and Jonathan, by his first marriage to Maria, said: "I have heard him talk within the last six months about scaling down and moving to a smaller place."

"Basically two of his children have left home and he feels he doesn't need as much space." The spokesman added that selling

the house would not be a precursor to Robinson scaling down his involvement in Granada and fulfilling his long-heralded intention of returning to Ireland.

His other interests, apart from his family, are the theatre and the opera. He enjoys performances at Covent Garden – though he has been accused of being "a lover of opera highlights" – and has sat on the council of the Royal Court Theatre. He takes up his post as chairman of the Arts Council in May. The job is for one-and-a-half days a week and unpaid.

The Arts Council may be in for a culture shock from the man described by a close work associate as "a shark in a Val Doonican pullover". His appointment followed the observation from a Commons Select Committee in December that it would be better to "recruit a philistine with financial acumen" to run the Royal Opera House than another "creative" type. Some would say the same criterion is being applied to the Arts Council.

People who work with Robinson rarely have a bad word to say about their boss, despite his ability to be ruthless when necessary. "He charms (he pants off everyone at Granada and people like working with him," said a colleague. "We know he can be nice but if you're not doing your job then you get called in for what he describes as a fire-side chat, which is not a pleasant experience."

"He's respected for being honest. He's not the smiling assassin who knifes you in the back. If you've screwed up, he will tell you to your face."

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The thankless task of caring for a Hollywood babe

It may seem the perfect way to sneak into a glamorous lifestyle, but, writes Louise Jury, being nanny to a celebrity's child can be a nightmare.

Nannying for a celebrity sounds like fun, and a passport to the stars. The actor Robin Williams even married his.

But, as demonstrated by the bitter fall-out between Demi Moore and her former nanny, Kim Tannahill, the domestic lives of the rich and famous can be fraught with difficulties.

Miss Tannahill claims the star of *Indecent Proposal* was exploitative, prone to massive mood swings and addicted to prescription drugs. She is claiming more than £500,000 for violation of her civil rights, which include accusations of false imprisonment and stalking.

In return, Miss Moore and her *Die Hard* action hero husband Bruce Willis allege that the nanny who cared for their three children, broke confidentiality clauses and fiddled expenses. They want damages in return.

The courts have to decide whether Miss Tannahill really was the nanny from hell, a failed actress out for revenge, or whether Moore and Willis were nightmare employers.

Whatever the truth, Hilare Gomer, co-author of *The Good Nanny Guide*, says film stars generally have to be tremendously strong-willed and mature to work for them. "You're paid more to work



Bad relations: Demi Moore and nanny Kim Tannahill Photograph: Alpha

for these people, but, boy, do you have to be there a lot of the time, and you get a lot of quick changes of plan. Needless to say, many actresses think they're God on earth and aren't as considerate or kind as they should be, and don't look at the job from the nanny's point of view. "It is just as applicable for someone like Demi Moore to give lots of notice that she's going out, as for any other employer."

Properly trained nannies are bound by confidentiality clauses, crucial for celebrities, for whom any domestic detail might provide a salacious tabloid headline. As a consequence, most nannies, anxious for their references, refuse to talk, even anonymously.

But Amanda Sutcliffe, who trained as a Norland nanny, recalls a brief stint early in her career working for an American

pop group. It embodied all the worst of celebrity childrearing.

Miss Sutcliffe, who formerly owned the Canonbury Nannies Agency in London, and now lectures and writes, tells how she was once telephoned and asked to help out for a few days with an American pop group on tour in London.

"They'd gone through about five nannies already. When I got there it was just unbelievable. We were in a little apartment and they said I had to sleep with the baby in my bed, not in a cot. They had no toys, and the baby was on a strange macrobiotic diet and couldn't have any milk. It was absolutely awful."

On the last night, she was invited, with baby, to the concert at Earl's Court, and went, believing it was the only way of escaping. "It was the last day of my duty, and it meant I could leave the baby with them and go

home. Otherwise they didn't roll in until 6am."

Yet perhaps it is Hollywood and rock that cause the problems. Television people are just fine, she says. "I never had any problems when I ran my agency in Islington. I had quite a lot of television personalities and people who were very well-known – MPs and so on – but they were fine. They were ordinary professional families."

Yet a friend who worked for the Jordanian royal family had a very strange life, Miss Sutcliffe adds. "It was very hard when she went on holiday on her own, because she was used to travelling first class. She travelled and lived in a completely unrealistic way for years, and when she left it was difficult for her."

In the wake of the trial of the British air pair Louise Woodward in America, many nanny agencies are unhappy about

discussing their work, other than to stress that an au pair is very different from a nanny.

But Angela Hovey, managing director of Occasional and Permanent Nannies in London, says she would certainly never get a young nanny to work for a high-profile family, because of the extra pressure – just as she would not put a young nanny in sole charge of children with both parents at work.

Judith Kark, principle of the Lucy Clayton College, which trains nannies, says a nanny who is star-struck by parents of their famous friends is useless. "The nanny has to realise she's not there to associate with the star, but with the child."

Yet the story of celebrity nannies is not all bad. Nicole Horlick, the City superwoman, has called her 45-year-old nanny, Joan, "the real heroine of my story". Anne Diamond, the television presenter, has said that her success would have been impossible without a series of excellent nannies (and from the one who attempted to sell family secrets to *The Sun*).

"I couldn't work without one," she told *The Independent*. "A lot of women wouldn't be able to get to the top of their profession without a good nanny behind them. A great nanny is an asset to the whole household." Hollywood takes note.

John Lytle is away

هكذا من الأصل

Cliffie Stone

Clifford Gilpin Snyder (Cliffie Stone), musician, broadcaster and record company executive: born Stockton, California 1 March 1917; twice married (three sons, one daughter); died Santa Clara, California 17 January 1998.

The sprawling metropolis of 1990s Los Angeles may not be the most obvious candidate for "country music capital of America", but from the late 1930s to the early 1950s it was close to being just that. The Great Depression had seen a huge influx of dispossessed Southerners into California and many brought with them a taste for "hillbilly" music with the inevitable result that dedicated shows dominated local radio programming. The radio station KFVD's *Covered Wagon Jubilee*, hosted by Stuart Hamblen, was among the most popular of these and featured a large, bearded band named Herman "The Hermit" Snyder. Snyder had been a musical fixture in the area for nearly two decades and had taught his son Cliffie to play bass guitar. The young Snyder seemed intent on a musical career and while still in his teens joined the cast of the show. Working under the name Cliffie Stonehead - later shortened to Stone - he augmented his bass-playing by serving as announcer, disc jockey and comic and was soon fronting shows of his own. He also performed in the

house band at the Pasadena Community Playhouse and in the hotel dance bands of both Anson Weeks and Freddie Slack. It was whilst with the latter that he made his recording debut in 1942 for the fledgling Capitol Records, a label with whom he would enjoy a fruitful association. He became assistant to Capitol's head producer Lee Gillette and, as the label's "expert" on hillbilly talent, brought a number of important acts onto its roster, including Merle Travis, Tex Williams, Jimmy Wakely and Hank Thompson.

The hits turned out by Stone's stable - including Williams's "Smokin' Smoke! (That Cigarette)" (1947) and Wakely's "One Has My Name (The Other Has My Heart)" (1948) - are credited with keeping Capitol buoyant at a time when it was still struggling to establish itself. As he later recalled: "We kept [Capitol] alive. Nat Cole used to hang around our sessions. He'd show up just amazed. He couldn't believe these guys could just play without any music or anything." Stone himself recorded several sides, enjoying hits with "Silver Stars, Purple Sage, Eyes of Blue" (1947) and a version of the Wiley Walker/Gene Sullivan standard "When My Blue Moon Turns To Gold Again" (1948). He and Merle Travis also penned three outright classics: "No Vacancy", "Divorce Me C.O.D." and "So Round, So Firm, So Fully Packed".

In the meantime, Stone continued to work on radio. During the Second World War, he fronted more than 20 weekly shows and by 1946 was hosting KXLA Pasadena's *Dinner Bell Round-Up*, which later metamorphosed into the famous *Hometown Jamboree*. There he met the announcer and sometime singer, Tennessee Ernie Ford. Recognising Ford's talent, Stone became his manager, signed him to Capitol, where he proved hugely successful, and eventually produced the television shows which brought Ford and country music into the living rooms of suburban America.

Hometown Jamboree boasted a formidable cast over the years - Wesley Tuttle, Merle Travis, Joe and Rose Lee Maphis, the child star Dallas Frazier and the instrumental wizards Jimmy Bryant and Speedy West - and all of them naturally gravitated to Capitol. From 1948 the show was broadcast live on television.

By the 1960s, however, changing tastes saw it wind down, leaving Stone to concentrate on his publishing (Central Songs and American Music) and recording (Granite Records) interests. In 1989 he was elected to Nashville's Country Music Hall of Fame. His sons have followed him into the music business: Steve and Jonathan Stone are both involved in music publishing while Curtis plays bass in the band Highway 101.

- Paul Wade



Stone: 'So round, so firm, so fully packed'

Dennis Selinger

Dennis Selinger, theatrical agent: born Black Rock, Brighton 20 July 1921; married 1988 Debra Winchester (marriage dissolved 1997); died London 2 February 1998.

In the often maligned world of theatrical agents who avidly seek work for their clients in return for a percentage, Dennis Selinger was unusual for the respect and warmth with which he was regarded. He rose from a humble start to become a super-agent with one of the most powerful show-business agencies, and many of his clients (who included Michael Caine, Peter Sellers and David Niven) became close friends.

Born in Black Rock, Brighton, in 1921, Selinger was the youngest of four children, and since his parents were elderly his older sister became a surrogate mother to him. When she married the theatrical agent Monty Lyon, Selinger became attracted to the idea of pursuing a similar career and at the age of 16 found work for his first client, a fan dancer in the East End who, according to Selinger, never paid him his one-shilling-and-sixpence commission.

Selinger became friendly with the three Winogradsky brothers (later better known as Lew Grade, Leslie Grade and Bernard Delfont) and Joe Collins (father of Joan), all of whom were beginning to make their name as theatrical agents. The camaraderie between the

men - they would recommend each other clients if appropriate - led to lifelong friendships.

Selinger's career was interrupted by the Second World War, during which he served as a gunner in Burma, but at one of the troop shows he spotted a new young comic named Peter Sellers, whom he encouraged and took on as a client when he opened his first tiny office in Soho. When Sellers, after three struggling years, received his first press notice in 1948 for an appearance on the radio variety programme *Show Time*, Selinger had it reproduced as a three-column advertisement in the trade paper the *Stage*, and sentimentally kept the fading original for the rest of his life.

Sellers was to remain a lifelong friend, as were Caine, Niven and Roger Moore. Selinger promoted Sean Connery for the role of James Bond in the first Bond film, *Dr No* (1962), and also handled his successors Roger Moore and George Lazenby. (Though he did not represent Pierce Brosnan, he championed him to step into the role when Moore departed.)

When Faye Dunaway's career was in the doldrums and she was parting from her husband Terry O'Neill she turned to Selinger for guidance and within two years her career had revived. The legendary comics Charles Chaplin, Harold Lloyd, and Laurel and Hardy were all managed by Selinger when they were in England. When the large agency



Selinger: super-agent

CMA metamorphosed into ICM (International Creative Management), Selinger took charge of their film-star roster. Among the leading Americans he represented in this country were Marlon Brando, Barbara Streisand and Bette Davis.

He would recount that when he first met Davis she was holding forth in the studio canteen, and when interrupted to be introduced to him, she opened her eyes wide, looked him up and down and said, "Yes fine, he'll be great for the part."

A bachelor for most of his life, Selinger in 1988 married the businesswoman Debra Winchester, who lived in the same street and had known him for many years. "I was literally the girl next door," she said. Though they divorced 10 months ago, they remained close. Selinger continued working on behalf of clients from his hospital bed until a few days before his death.

- Tom Vulliamy

John Hay



John Albert Hay, politician: born Brighton 24 November 1919; MP (Conservative) for Henley 1950-1974; PPS to President of Board of Trade 1951-56; Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Transport 1959-63; Civil Lord of the Admiralty 1963-64; Under-Secretary for Defence for the Royal Navy 1964; married 1947 Beryl Found (one son, one daughter; marriage dissolved 1973); 1974 Janet Spruce; died 27 January 1998.

When you next use a parking meter, or cannot find a parking space next to one, bless, or curse, according to your inclination, John Hay.

When you next want to get to a remote destination by rail, and find that the line was probably used by your parents, you will almost certainly curse Hay; for he was the junior minister at the Department of Transport - under the flamboyant Ernest Marples - who, over four years from the Conservative general election victory of 1959, devised and introduced meters, and it was he who implemented the swinging cuts in the rail network which Lord Beeching recommended to the government of Harold Macmillan. If you are sympathetic to so-called "green" issues, you may also blame Hay for being the executive minister who put in place the massive road-building programme visualised by Marples.

As a young man, Hay was an immensely successful politician;

he was not unlike the young William Hague. He made his first - intensely dramatic - Tory Party Conference speech in 1946, at the age of 28, a then unheard-of triumph by a stripling. Hague, of course, made his first big impact at 15. But Hay was destined to decline into political obscurity or unpopularity, because of the measures he adopted; Hague has gone on to acquire at least the hope of glory.

Hay had seemed set fair for great success. At the age of 11 he worked for his father's campaign to become a member of Brighton council, thereby acquiring very early political experience. In 1947 as Chairman of the Young Conservative movement, he entertained both Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden at the YC annual conference. The two great men were sensible of the desirability of speaking to this gathering, for at that time, the Young Conservatives were the largest voluntary youth organisation in the

world. Only a few months ago, and their social behaviour judged outrageous by the party establishment, they were abolished by William Hague.

Until 1970, when Edward Heath passed him over for a ministerial job, John Hay made a quite dashing impression. He was the son of a local solicitor, and went to grammar school in Brighton, but he was said to have Etonian airs. He was handsome and debonair, and he was a fine public speaker. He had high ambitions, but something, somewhere, went wrong.

Perhaps it was that Hay had too much independence of mind, and was too ready to speak that mind forcefully. In 1947, for example, he was adopted as the Conservative Party's parliamentary candidate for Brighton. Brixton was not a winnable seat but Hay, like other youngsters then and now, was expected to hood himself in a hopeless fight. Within months

he resigned the candidacy, on the publicly declared grounds that the local party association was both lazy and incompetent. This demonstration ofchutzpah did not, however, prevent his being adopted for Henley the next year: he entered Parliament in the 1950 general election.

The truth about Hay seems to be that, for all his soft charm, he relished outspokenness, and did not in the least mind unpopularity, which he endured in full measure during the Marples reforms. Again, when from 1968 he succeeded in turning around the fortunes of Walport - an entertainment subsidiary of Rediffusion of which he was managing director - he left many bruised egos in his wake.

Hay retired from the House of Commons in 1974, partly on grounds of health, partly, I think because he knew that he had no serious future in politics. John Hay's star, alas, was one that shimmered, but never shone. - Patrick Cosgrove

Davy Kaye

Davy Kaye, comedian and actor: born London 25 April 1916; MBE 1995; married Hazel Wilson (one son; marriage dissolved); died Paradise Island, Bahamas 3 February 1998.

Davy Kaye was the archetypal East End Jewish comedian who would have been seen by his mother to have "done well".

Standing just under five feet, he was a cocky wisecracking figure, both on stage and off, who looked as if he would have been just as much at home in a tailor's shop. He had more in common with American comics such as Milton Berle and Sid Caesar than he did with British variety and yet for 60 years he managed to top variety bills, made numerous radio broadcasts for the BBC and was a popular panellist on quiz shows. One of the highlights of his stage act was his one-man-band routine where he played "McNamara's Band" with drums, cymbals and hooters and in the process got caught up in a complete shambles.

His first professional engagement was on a variety bill in 1935 at the Mile End Empire. At the outbreak of the Second World War he was rejected by the Army on the grounds of his diminutive size, later telling the story that the medical officer had said, "When we declare war on pygmies - we'll send for you."

This led to his appearing in variety and revue shows at munitions factories and army bases before joining the BBC, where he was a regular with such shows as *Midday Music*

Hall and Variety Bandbox, alongside such names as Norman Evans, Derek Roy, Mrs Shufflewick and other radio comics who were beginning to make a name for themselves.

After the war his agent was the legendary Joe Collins (the father of Joan), who booked him as principal comic in Teddy Hinge's revue *Rummy Get Your Gun* in London. The title became the subject of a well-publicised court case brought by the impresario Emile Littler, who was presenting the musical *Annie Get Your Gun* at the same time. Littler lost the case and the posters were then overprinted by Kaye himself with the words "The Show They Tried to Ban!" which naturally increased business.

For 14 years, from 1954 to 1968, Kaye was resident late night comedian at the Embassy Club in London, and at one stage was doubling by appearing as the character Benny Southstreet in the original production of *Gugs and Dolls* at the London Coliseum. He played the lead (which was actually five

parts) in the ill-fated 1960 Wolf Mankowitz musical *Belle (The Ballad of Dr Crippen)*, which was deemed a disaster by the critics.

He fared better playing another lead, in *Androcles and the Lion* in the 1960s at the invitation of Bernard Miles at the Mermaid followed by a series of cameo appearances in *Crooks in Cloisters* (1963), *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (1968), and a memorable slot as a book-maker in *Carry On At Your Convenience* (1971).

A brash man who was reputedly difficult to work with, he nevertheless was rarely out of work and on two occasions the Variety Club of Great Britain gave him a lunch in his honour at the Dorchester Hotel to celebrate his 50th and 60th year in show business respectively, both of which were televised on the BBC. Kaye was a man who enjoyed such occasions, usually inviting most of the guests himself with the line "I hope you'll be coming", meaning that it was something of a royal command.

For 40 years he was a comic force to be reckoned with in the Grand Order of Water Rats, the show-business charitable organisation, particularly at their lodge meetings, where he would deliberately try to upstage fellow comics. One of Davy Kaye's last appearances was as a special guest on *Barmycore* in 1987: there he talked amiably to his host with a fund of typical show-business stories, heavily embroidered, but was none the less a throwback to an era that is completely gone.

- Patrick Newley



Kaye: diminutive

Edward Craig

All is not lost for those readers intrigued by the sound of Edward Craig's unfulfilled biography of his grandfather Gaetano Mico, writes Marie-Joelle Ancester [further to the obituary by Tom Craig, 23 January]. On 25 November 1994 BBC Radio 3 broadcast a magical feature, *Orpheus Ascending*, produced by Piers Plowright. Here Patrick Craig recounts the story of his young grandfather's epic

walk in 1860 from "the instep" of Italy through France and on to London with only his harp and asses' skin cloak - no money, no baggage, few words of French and fewer English. Carrick acts out, with infectious enthusiasm, all the characters and their attendant noises - Gaetano, villagers, the brigands with whom he made friends, the Italian mammas who befriended him, the memorable captain

of the ship at Boulogne who took him under his wing and smuggled him into London sans passport, while sundry Italians fill in the background with evocative songs and verses.

In London Gaetano had to find sympathetic Italian restaurants who would allow him to "ply" his harp in their back gardens, safe from the police who were out to catch itinerant musicians who might upset im-

portant - or sick - residents. When all his resources were no more, an Italian barber sent him to see Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who was enchanted by the boy and introduced him to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, as grunder of colours, model and student painter, until he made his own name with the mosaics in the great hall of Mr Debenham's grandiose house in Holland Park, and finally became

naturalised, sponsored by William Morris.

Carrick ends with his recollected enjoyment of how he mended the family rift since his father Gordon Craig, already married, eloped with Gaetano's favourite daughter Elena. At the age of six his parents told him to approach this unknown grandparent in Italian. "Nonno, nonno," he cried out. Gaetano was captivated.

LAW REPORT: 6 FEBRUARY 1998

Lockable folding pocket knife is a bladed article

A folding pocket knife which was capable of being locked open was a bladed article for the purposes of section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

Regina v Deegan: Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) (Lord Justice Waller, Mr Justice Owen and Mr Justice Sullivan) 4 February 1998.

The Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal of Desmond Garcia Deegan against his conviction at Harrow Crown Court on his plea of guilty, following a ruling by the judge, to possessing a bladed article in a public place contrary to section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

The appellant had been stopped by police officers and had been found to be in possession of a pocket knife which was capable of being opened and locked into an open position, and equally capable of being folded once the mechanism had been operated to unlock the blade. He was charged with an offence under section 139 of the Act, and originally pleaded not guilty. He changed his plea, however, after the judge had ruled that he was bound by two decisions of the Divisional Court, namely *Harris v DPP* and *Fehmi v DPP* (1993) 96 Cr App R 235, and that the interpretation placed on a bladed article in those cases applied to the bladed article found in the appellant's possession.

The judge discharged the appellant absolutely, and certified that the matter was fit for appeal.

Benjamin Hargreaves (Registrar of Criminal Appeals) for the appellant; *Ian Lait* (Crown Prosecution Service) for the Crown.

Lord Justice Waller said that section 139 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 provided: (1) "... any person who has an article to which this section applies with him in a public place shall be guilty of an offence. (2) Subject to subsection (3) below, this section applies to any article which has a blade or is sharply pointed except a folding pocket knife. (3) This section applies to a folding pocket knife if the cutting edge of its blade exceeds three inches.

The Divisional Court had held in *Harris v DPP* and *Fehmi v DPP* that to be a "folding pocket knife" the blade had to be readily and immediately foldable at all times simply by the folding process. A knife which on opening automatically locked and could not be folded until a button had been pressed was not a "folding pocket knife".

Counsel for the appellant had sought to persuade the

court that the conditions of *Pepper v Hart* [1993] AC 593 were applicable so as to make admissible ministerial statements made whilst the Bill which ultimately became the Criminal Justice Act 1988 was being debated in Parliament, and that the court should accordingly look at certain passages in *Hansard*, which, he submitted, clearly showed that the type of knife carried by the appellant was intended to be excluded from the section.

Without objection from the Crown the court had examined the material from *Hansard de bene esse*. However, it was important to establish whether the conditions in *Pepper v Hart* had been complied with so as to make the material admissible. One of those conditions was that the ministerial statements relied upon were clear.

Although in one sense the statements the court had examined were clear, in that the ministers had clearly thought that they were excluding from section 139 not just pocket knives which fitted the Divisional Court's interpretation of "folding", but some which "locked" when open, they were not clear in the sense required by *Pepper v Hart*. That was because "locking pocket knives" was itself an ambiguous phrase.

In those circumstances the conditions of *Pepper v Hart* had not been fulfilled, and it was not legitimate for the court to take the ministerial statements into account. Furthermore, to construe the phrase "folding pocket knife" differently from the way in which the Divisional Court had construed it would be impermissible.

- Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS
RYNNE: Mr Sarah Muriel, died peacefully at home on Wednesday 4 February, aged 91 years. Private family funeral on Tuesday 17 February, but all friends welcome to Bramblewood on 17 February from 1pm.

announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In memoriam) should be sent to writing to a Gazette Editor, The Independent, Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL, telephoned to 020-7353 2002 or faxed to 020-7353 2000, and are charged at £4.50 a line (VAT extra). **THESE** announcements (marriages, adoptions, divorces, remarriages, etc.) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line (VAT extra). Please include a daytime telephone number.

OBITUARIES e-mail address: enquiries@independent.co.uk

ROYAL ANNOUNCEMENTS
at Prince of Wales undertakes an official visit to Nepal.

hanging of the Guard
at Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment outside the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards on 10.30. Complete Colours (South) on 10.30. Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 10.30. Band provided by the Irish Guards.

Birthdays

The Right Rev Edwin Barnes, Bishop Suffragan of Richmond, 63; Mr Mike Bant, popular music composer and arranger, 48; Rabbi Lionel Blue, broadcaster, 68; Mr Nicholas Brett, Editor, *Radio Times*, 48; Sir Denys Buckley, former Lord Justice of Appeal, 82; Mr Peter Cadbury, former company chairman, 80; Mr John Flemming, Warden, Wadham College, Oxford, 57; Miss Zsa Zsa Gabor, actress, 78; Mr Tom Harris, former ambassador to Korea, 53; Dr Christopher Hill, former Master, Balliol College, Oxford, 86; Miss Gayle Hammett, actress, 53; Professor Nevill Johnson, political scientist, 69; Mr Patrick McNeel, actor, 76; Mr George Mudge MP, Treasurer of HM Household, 53; Mr Denis Norden, writer and broadcaster, 76; Mr Manuel Orazes, tennis player, 49; Ronald Reagan, former US president, 81; Mr Tom Richardson, ambassador to Italy, 57; Mr Mark Sheldon, former President, Law Society of England and Wales, 67; Mr Brian Simpson, comedian, 58; Mr Fred Thumman, architect, 67; Mr Keith Waterhouse, writer, 69; Kevin Whately, actor, 47.

Anniversaries

Births: Christopher Marlowe, playwright, 1564; Sir Henry Irving (John Henry Brodribb), actor, 1838; François Truffaut, film director, 1932. Deaths: Lancelotti "Capobianchi" Brown, landscape gardener, 1783;

Carlo Goldoni, playwright, 1793; Charles Langbride Morgan, author, 1958. On this day: Great Britain and Macri chiefs signed the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand, 1840; an Act of Parliament granted votes for women over 30, 1918; Queen Elizabeth II succeeded to the throne, 1952; seven members of the Manchester United football team were among 21 killed in an air crash at Munich, 1958. Today is the National Day of St Andrew, St Guarinus of Palestrina, St Hildegard, Saints Mel and Modest, St Paul Miki and his Companions and St Vedast or Vast.

Lectures

Victoria and Albert Museum: Kate McCuskey, "Surrealist Furniture", 2.30pm. Gresham College (Barnard's Inn Hall, London EC1): Professor Colin Pilling, "Sejourning and Surveying on Mars", 1pm.

Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 4.44pm.

United Synagogue: 0181-343 8989. Federation of Synagogues: 0181-202 2263. Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 0171-580 1663. Great Reform Synagogue of Great Britain: 0181-349 4721. Spanish and Portuguese Jews Congregation: 0171-289 2572. New London Synagogue (Masorti): 0171-326 1026.

When it comes to welfare, the special relationship offers a lesson in failure



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Glamour, foreign policy and ideology have always been the three ingredients of the special relationship between British and American governments. So it is with Mr Blair's trip to Washington. The glamour works both ways. The Prime Minister gets the red carpet treatment from the "most powerful man in the world" and huge US media coverage, some of which will be reflected back into our islands. While Bill Clinton gets a big endorsement from Mr Squeaky-Clean. No matter that Mr Blair would rather be thought "effective" than squeaky-clean. Or that most Americans have no idea that Mr Blair is a Christian moralist with a blameless private life: he is British, polite and easily captioned as the most successful centre-left politician of the democratic world.

The fact that the President is knee-deep in the trash of the affair of "Monica what-ever-her-name-is", as the Prime Minister's official spokesman described her, means that the terms of trade in image are more

in Britain's favour than ever. Mr Blair can hardly be criticised for wanting to take full advantage of the situation, although so far his attempts to provide moral support for the President without commenting on the specific allegations have been rather up-gaily. But we are entitled to ask what the people of Britain are getting out of it.

For some, questioning the special relationship is simply absurd, reminiscent of the Monty Python sketch. "Yes, but, apart from saving our nation in two world wars and rebuilding Europe with Marshall Aid, what have the Americans ever done for us?" Surely, though, all alliances have to be judged afresh for each generation, as Mr Blair himself might put it.

So let us consider the other two aspects of the relationship. First, foreign policy. We should put aside the thought that missile-rattling against Saddam Hussein is a diversionary tactic aimed at American public opinion. Even if that were true, it would not invalidate military action against Iraq

if it is justified in international law. And it should be said clearly and unhesitatingly that it is.

As the Prime Minister reminded the Commons on Wednesday, the Iraqi leader agreed at the UN to destroy all his chemical, biological and nuclear weapons of mass destruction. Since then, UN inspectors have found abundant evidence that he has failed to do so. Mr Blair is quite right to pledge this country's full support for the enforcement of UN resolutions. That is not slavishly following Washington's line: it would be required by any foreign policy calling itself "ethical", and it is the French and the Russians who should be criticised for trying to undermine the rule of law.

There is no need for a special relationship here. However, simply stopping Saddam from developing weapons of mass destruction will not bring a just and lasting settlement in Iraq. That requires a wider accommodation between the

Arab countries and the West, and Israel. Where the British government has been too reluctant to criticise America is on its policy towards Israel. If UN resolutions should be enforced pitilessly against Iraq, so they should be against Israel, and Mr Blair should tell Mr Clinton so.

The most potentially valuable strand of the special relationship, then, is the ideological one. Just as Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan lent support to each other's domestic policies, Mr Blair and Mr Clinton claim to have learnt from each other on welfare reform, social inclusion, schools and labour market policy. Today, Mr Blair's best minds meet All the President's Winks for a "free-wheeling" discussion. They intend to carry on thrashing out the nitty gritty of the so-called "third way" between Reagan-Thatcher capitalism and state socialism.

Good luck to them. But do not expect The Answer to be issued on tablets of stone at the news conference afterwards. The

truth is that the promise of Clintonism, which won the presidency in 1992 and inspired Mr Blair's dash for the Labour leadership on a platform of social moralism, has not yet been realised in the US. "Welfare as we know it" has not been ended, and the "Wisconsin model" for getting people off welfare and into work has only just started. The fact is that, after five years, Mr Clinton's side of the table has surprisingly little concrete to offer Mr Blair's. The President's State of the Union address last week would have been good at the start of an administration, but not towards its end. No wonder both leaders say they are worried that their joint "project" will be seen more as soundbite than substance.

Let us hope that, behind the niceties, Mr Blair and his party are learning the real lessons – of the relative failure of the New Democrat project. As with many human relationships, the special relationship needs a healthy dose of hypocrisy and mutual scepticism to succeed.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Saville inquiry

If Lord Saville of Newdigate's inquiry into the killings in Derry on 30 January 1972 is to have a less implausible outcome than the late Lord Widgery's, he and his colleagues must be given, and be seen to be given, access to all pertinent testimonies. This is a matter in which the British culture of traditional secrecy is inapplicable.

It is reported that official British medical records concerning the persons killed and wounded on Bloody Sunday are being withheld from the public until the year 2047 ("Military accused of lying to 1972 inquiry", 30 January). The bans on publication of the records must be lifted at once, so that quotations may be made in the published report upon the inquiry.

Witnesses will also wish to read them before being summoned to the public hearings. Unless the documents are released for consultation, there is a danger that the objectivity of the inquiry will be called into question before it has even begun.

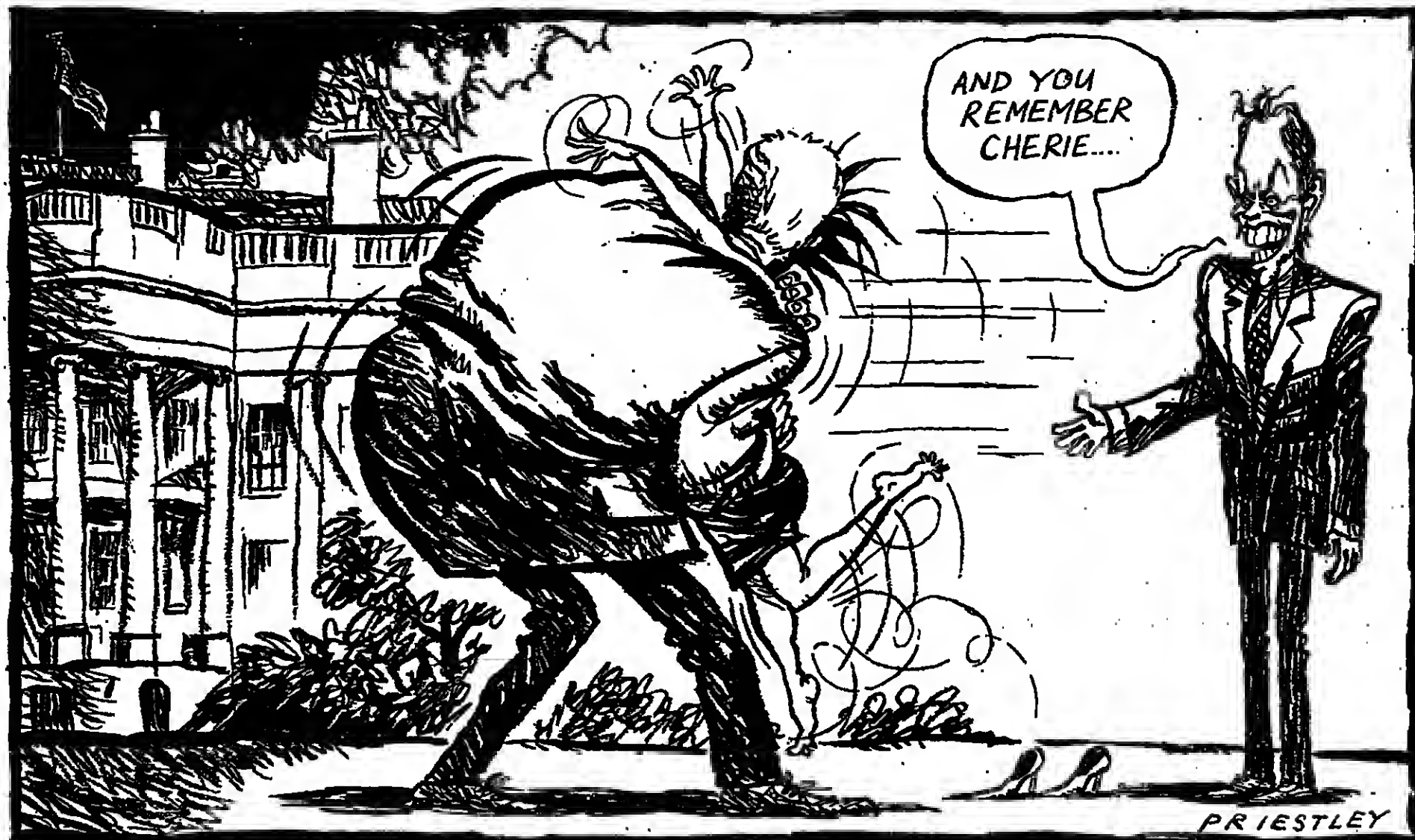
GEORGE HUXLEY
Trinity College, Dublin
The writer was a Member of the Executive, Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association 1971-72

Bombs won't work

Bombing Iraq would be ineffective in forcing Iraqi compliance, as it would serve to increase Saddam Hussein's support amongst Iraqi people ("Cook flies to the gulf", 4 February).

By 1993, according to UNicef, the economic sanctions to impoverish the country had caused at least 100,000 child deaths from malnutrition, vaccine-preventable diseases and contaminated water supplies. Combined with civilian casualties in the Gulf War and the two cruise missile attacks which have taken place since then, it is easy to spread the perception that the West is interested in harming the general population of Iraq rather than its brutal leadership.

To the small extent that the Iraqi government needs the support of the people, Saddam Hussein would be pleased to take any opportunity to portray himself as standing up to outside pressure: Britain and the United States are trapped, one fears, into a narrow and un-



Tougher on drivers

James Hannaway (letter, 4 February) writes that his freedom to drink and drive should not be sacrificed. I am in favour of more restrictions on my driving freedom – the new lower limit on drink-driving, a ban on using mobile phones while driving, a 20mph speed limit in residential areas. Why? Because on the best available evidence, all these measures would reduce deaths and serious injuries on the roads, and I don't think my convenience is worth anyone else's suffering.

MICHAEL NICHOLAS
Oxford

We have more deaths on the road than other European countries. We are more densely populated than almost any other country in Europe – isn't this likely to ensure we have more deaths, regardless of how low the drink-drive limit is? If we had a zero drink-drive limit, would this mean that we would have no deaths from drunken drivers? Is there any way of knowing how low the limit must be before the effect of reduced levels has no further effect? We may already be at that level, given the number of cars on our roads.

NICK AUSTIN
Crowhurst, East Sussex

Perhaps James Hannaway and his fellow two-pint drinkers could consider the possibility of "stopping off" for one pint, and having their second pint at home.

CAPT M D RAHILLY
Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire

Abolish the lottery

"We told you so" is always an irritating comment, but it remains the fact that, three years ago, many in the churches warned that the National Lottery was an inherently sleazy licence to print money. A corruption scandal ended the previous national lottery 170 years ago, after a run of about a century. It now appears its successor was tainted from the very beginning ("Call for investigation into Camelot's lottery licence", 5 February).

Given the lamentable track record, surely the time has come not to reform this charity-robbing tax on the poor, but to abolish it?

THE REV PETER HATTON
Droitwich, Worcestershire

Merit from mergers

It must be very difficult for the directors of Glaxo Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham to decide on the merits or otherwise of their merger when they have such a strong financial interest in its going ahead (Business Outlook, 3 February). The advisers, who are reported to be likely to receive £400m for their contribution to an agreed merger (I would be happy to do this myself for rather less), also have a considerable incentive, which in many other spheres would raise questions about the quality of their advice.

May I suggest to the directors that they could easily persuade the public of their objectivity by committing the profit from share options arising from the merger (rather than from their good stewardship of the company) to charity, or to the redundancy fund for those members of their staff whose departure will be the prime cause of the added

value of the joint company?

This would be analogous to the building society which makes it a requirement of new members that they similarly donate windfall bonuses. On a rather different scale, of course.

MICHAEL SHOESMITH
Lydney North, Shropshire

The case for legal aid

Martin McKenna perpetuates the myth that civil legal aid for compensation claims is granted to undeserving cases (report, 4 February).

I am a partner in a legal aid practice. It is very difficult to obtain legal aid for a client who has a fighting chance. It is easier to obtain legal aid for a client who is almost certain to win. Unless a client has more than a 75 per cent chance of winning, he will not get legal aid.

Further, Mr McKenna perpetuates the myth that businesses end up paying for the legal advice they receive in defending claims. Most business-

es have legal expenses insurance and if they do not, then they ought to obtain it.

Claims for personal injury, according to the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers, cost the Legal Aid Fund about £55,213,348 and the Government receives from the compensator (usually an insurance company) about £67m in repayment of benefits received by the injured party as a result of the injuries suffered. Civil legal aid spent on personal injury cases is therefore money well spent. The total amount of compensation recovered in 1995/96 was £518,584,482 and most of this will have been paid by insurers.

The Lord Chancellor, the Home Secretary and his ministers are attacking legal aid and those lawyers who work within its confines without producing any real evidence that legal aid is abused by applicants or lawyers.

A M ROBINSON
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Bigoted musicians

It was predictable a few die-hard atonalists would come out of the woodwork and misconstrue my speech to the World Economic Forum as an attack on them (letters, 4 and 5 February). Yet I specifically said that "I do not necessarily criticise that style". What I did criticise was the arrogant attitude, exemplified by Martin Parker, that it is only acceptable to write contemporary classical music in one style. That bigoted, narrow-minded approach was a primary cause of Western classical music's current malaise.

I fail to understand how Mr Parker can interpret my pleas for greater media coverage of gimmick-free classical music and for more concert reviews in quality newspapers as "anti-culture". And, by the way, what does he mean by "contemporary art music"?

JULIAN LLOYD WEBBER
London SW7

Recaptured by the Pirates, and surrendering again to the other forgotten lures of youth



MILES KINGTON

Looking back to my teens, I realise that adolescence wasn't just a time for experimenting. It was a time for giving up as well. I think I probably abandoned more practices in my teens than I ever adopted or persevered with, or indeed that I have abandoned since. For instance, before I reached the age of 19 or 20 I had already stopped writing poetry, playing rugby, playing the trombone, trying to learn Welsh, taking bagpipe lessons, doing the high jump, attempting to master ballroom dancing, having homosexual leanings, and reading Agatha Christie and Dennis Wheatley. I haven't done any of them since, not once. Occasionally I regret not having learnt Welsh, and when I was 19 I used to feel sorry I had managed to read all Agatha Christie's books without leaving any to look forward to (but then I discovered Raymond Chandler), despite which I go through life on the whole without a back-

ward glance to that far-off, oddly assorted collection of enthusiasms.

However, the other day I did go back. Not to any of the above practices, but to something I thought had been eradicated by over-exposure in my teens – to an evening of Gilbert and Sullivan. My parents sent me to the kind of school that liked to put on Gilbert and Sullivan productions because they were safe and not too difficult and sedentary and full of opportunities for musicians and performers and carpenters, and so I found myself from time to time playing bit parts in *The Mikado*, and *HMS Pinafore*, and lots more. And because Gilbert wrote very good jokes and Sullivan wrote very good tunes, I enjoyed it and it all stuck in my mind somewhere, like a deserted pool in the woods, no longer visited but all still there.

I never thought of going to see a Gilbert and Sullivan opera when I grew up,

partly because I had grown up, partly because it was the sort of thing it was more fun to do yourself than see someone else doing, and partly because my experience at school taught me that if you saw G & S done by complete strangers, it wasn't half as good as when you knew everyone in the cast. I had been taken occasionally to see D'Oyley Carte productions, which were dead from the waist up and down, and had once seen a film of *HMS Pinafore*... done by Americans which was such an awful concept that, mentally, I walked out of it.

Interestingly, the Americans are often nuts about Gilbert and Sullivan. I have never worked out why. Is there any other nation in the world that even knows about G & S? Have the French come to terms with them yet? The Germans...?

And then this week the Theatre Royal, Bath, was home for a week to *The Pirates of Penzance* done by the West Yorkshire

Playhouse. I knew about the WYP: They were, apparently, wonderful. Their productions were often reviewed in places like *Kaleidoscope*, and always rapily, and put on in Leeds, which I couldn't get to. They probably had done a good job on *The Pirates of Penzance*. I then discovered that neither my wife nor my son had ever seen any G & S, so off we went tentatively and fearfully on Monday, and I have to report that everything I thought it was terrific. Much better than I remember it from my teens.

This was partly because the material itself stood up quite well, like a mature if slightly staid pantomime, but mostly because the production took liberties which D'Oyley Carte would never have dreamt of, without sabotaging it. Wherever things were a bit staid or slow, they camped it up a bit – the policemen, especially, were gratifyingly over the top led by a wonderfully rubbery Sergeant (Stephen Matthews), the

Pirate King (Jeremy Harrison) managed to be funny as well as tremendously dashing, while hero Frederic was terribly tall and handsome, and had a lovely voice.

(I looked up Frederic in the programme to see who he was played by, and found it was an actor called Mark Umbers, of whom my programme biographical note said: "The Pirates of Penzance is Mark's first professional theatre work." Blimey. If that was his first job, apart from one or two bits on TV, he's going to go far...)

Well, in years to come will I look back at this moment as the start of my second childhood? The moment when I started reverting to lost pleasures? Is that an Agatha Christie novel I see before me? Will I have another bash at the bagpipes? Or the waltz?

Well, of course not. The idea is quite ludicrous. But then, so was the idea of giving Gilbert and Sullivan another go. I had better watch myself.

British Gas may launch telephone challenge to BT

British Gas is considering launching an onslaught on the telephone market, a move which would represent a direct challenge to British Telecom. *Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, reports on the latest evidence of the cut-throat competition between the privatised utilities.*

Industry watchers see such developments as defensive moves by former monopolies eager to protect their existing customer base. In recent months British Gas has expanded the range of products offered to its customers, with trials of home insurance, bill protection insurance and the likelihood of an imminent move into the home security business.

British Gas has also proved more aggressive than expected in defending its share of the gas market, with controversial selective price cuts offered to loyal customers in some regions open to domestic competition. So far it has so far lost 934,000 customers, around 21 per cent of homes in competitive areas. Centrica will also sell electricity when the retail market opens to competition later this year.

Interest in the phone market has been boosted by recently agreed changes due in 2000 to shake up the UK's system of telecoms competition. The Government last year signed up to a European Union directive which would see Britain move to a so-called "equal access" regime similar to that in the US, making it simpler for homes to switch from BT.

The present system, known as indirect access, means existing BT customers have to dial three-digit codes to make long-distance calls with other operators, such as Cable & Wireless or AT&T. The new regime would make it easier for established brands, such as British Gas or Virgin, to offer phone services, probably by renting capacity off an established long-distance network.

The arrangement could probably see high street brands team up with some of the newer phone networks such as Energis. It would combine the phone company's infrastructure with the marketing knowledge and billing infrastructure of groups such as British Gas.

The explosion in phone competition in recent years has seen the wholesale cost of phone capacity drop steeply, with some 200 companies now licensed by Ofcom, the watchdog, to offer telecoms services.

Yesterday one of the newest operators, Fibrenet, revealed it had completed its UK network ahead of schedule at a cost of just £7m. The network is used for high speed data traffic for companies and is rented out to other phone operators.

The company, quoted on the Alternative Investment Market, has leased capacity from other operators such as Racal Telecom, which owns the former British Rail Telecom network. Fibrenet has combined this with its own regional switches providing connections to 35 towns and cities and a smaller network of its own in central London.

Outlook, page 21



Cooking up a multi-utility: British Gas could combine with one of the new phone networks

No rate rise despite danger signals

The Bank of England delighted home buyers and industrialists by not raising the cost of borrowing yesterday. *Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, reports on a decision that came in spite of fresh signs of pay pressures and buoyant high street spending.*

Business organisations welcomed the Monetary Policy Committee's decision to leave rates unchanged at 7.25 per cent. "This decision was a tough one to make, but we believe the Monetary Policy Committee got it right," said Ian Peters, deputy director general of the British Chambers of Commerce.

The Confederation of British Industry also expressed its relief, and the pound reacted by shedding more than two pence to end at DM2.96. Yet the CBI's monthly survey of business on the high street, published yesterday as the MPC finished its meeting, painted an upbeat picture of consumer spending in January.

The proportion of retailers saying sales volumes were higher than a year ago outweighed those reporting a fall by 36 per cent, slightly more than the previous month. One in five - a higher proportion than any time since September 1996 - said business was above average for the time of year.

Alastair Eperon, chairman of the CBI's distributive trades survey panel, said: "Last month's growth reported by all retail sectors is good news." But he added that higher volumes might have been achieved through price discounting in the January sales rather than reflecting a real increase in consumer spending.

A separate survey from the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) sent a clearer signal of potential inflationary troubles ahead. For the second month running pay settlements in the industry had increased, after remaining level for most of the second half of last year.

The average settlement reported by members in the three months to December was 3.6 per cent, up from 3.4 per cent in the three months to November.

The EEF said that although the rise was small, it represented the first signs of an acceleration in pay. David Yeandle, head of employment affairs, said January would be the key month for settlements.

Pay deals were now in line with headline inflation after trailing below it for the previous few months.

Sources close to Centrica, the supply group which owns the British Gas name, said the move was one of a number of options being investigated to extend a brand which is being successfully rehabilitated after years of criticism over customer service.

One possibility was that a service would be launched under the name Goldfish, the brand created to launch Centrica's credit card. Despite initial scepticism, Goldfish has become the UK's fastest growing credit card, amassing 600,000 customers in the space of a year.

Centrica has also been closely monitoring the experience of ScottishPower, which has done more than any other company to expand the multi-utility concept. Spurred on by its takeovers of Manweb, the regional electricity company, and Southern Water, ScottishPower has moved aggressively into other markets including gas and telecoms.

A British Gas spokeswoman said: "We're constantly looking at the market. We haven't ruled it in and we haven't ruled it out."

NatWest offers cheap calls to card users

NatWest, the high street bank, is preparing to raise the stakes in the battle for credit card customers by introducing Visa and Access cards which will allow users to make cheap telephone calls. The cost of the calls will be charged to their cards.

Credit card users can already use their cards to make calls from many payphones. But holders of NatWest cards will be able to make calls from any phone. Moreover, the calls will be roughly 25 per cent cheaper than credit card payphones.

Users will pick up any phone and dial a freephone number, followed by their credit card account number and a PIN number. They can then make as many calls as they like, and the costs will be charged to their credit card.

The bank already offers the

service to firms who issue NatWest cards to their employees for use as corporate credit cards.

Companies are especially keen to make sure that employees on business trips use the cards when making calls because the charges - all of which are handled by the telephone service group World Telecom - dramatically undercut the cost of phoning from a hotel room.

However, NatWest is ready to offer the service to its retail cardholders in an attempt to stop them from switching to rival card companies offering cheaper borrowing rates. The service will first be introduced to the bank's 500,000 Gold Card customers before being extended to users of the remaining 3.5 million NatWest credit cards later this year.

- Peter Thal Larsen

ICI puts suppliers on notice over euro

Imperial Chemical Industries warned suppliers yesterday they would be frozen out of its £5bn-a-year purchasing programme unless they switched to the euro from day one. Meanwhile, a senior European Commissioner warned of the threat posed to business the longer the Government stayed out of the single currency.

Charles Miller Smith, ICI's chief executive, said the "prejudice would be against" any suppliers who failed to adopt the euro from 1 January 1999. The group would insist on pricing in euros from suppliers across Europe from day one.

ICI has several thousand European suppliers, several hun-

dred of which are British, while annual sales to countries likely to adopt the single currency are about £2.3bn a year.

ICI estimates that switching to the euro will save it £15m a year in treasury costs - about the same as the one-off cost of adapting its computer systems to cope with the single currency. The millennium bug will cost it £80m.

Earlier this week Rover, the car group which is now owned by BMW, said it expected all its suppliers to have converted to the euro by next year. Rover purchases £4bn worth of components a year, 85 per cent of which are UK-sourced.

Meanwhile, Yves-Thibault de Silguy, the European Commissioner for Monetary Affairs, warned that failure to join a single currency could deter inward investors and put British companies at a disadvantage to their continental competitors. Speaking in the City last night, he said: "How long will British



Yves-Thibault de Silguy: Warned of UK disadvantage

companies want to bear the cost and exchange rate risk of non-participation as they do business in other member states? These are costs their competitors in the euro zone will not have."

The strength of sterling knocked £190m off ICI profits last year. The group said it expected exchange rates to remain about the same this year.

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UK companies criticise City analysts

Merrill Lynch is the UK's favourite research house, according to a survey published yesterday. But the plaudits comes with a sting in the tail - UK companies are becoming increasingly concerned about the quality of City research.

Lead Paterson reports.

Four out of 10 UK companies say City analysts do not understand sales & marketing. One in five believes analysts fail to grasp corporate strategy, management structure or market trends, while 15 per cent said analysts could not even understand their accounts.

UK industry also believes the quality of City research has fallen over the last year, according to a survey of 170 top companies by Consensus Research International (CRI), the market research consultancy.

Some 14 per cent of com-

panies believed there had been a deterioration in the quality of research by analysts on the "sell side" during 1997. And 6 per cent said the quality of analysis by institutions (or "buy side" analysts) had fallen.

Merrill Lynch topped the list of favourite research houses by a clear margin, with SBC Warburg coming a distant second. There was better news for SBC Warburg, though, elsewhere in the survey. The Swiss-owned bank was voted the UK's favourite corporate fi-

nance adviser in equity markets, just ahead of Cazenove, the winner in both 1996 and 1997.

SBC Warburg also has the most corporate finance expertise, according to the survey, with J Henry Schroder coming second.

Clive Brand, CRI chief services director, said: "This year's survey shows all too clearly how City reputations can be built and lost in a relatively short space of time."

Merrill Lynch was rated just third in the research list in 1996 and Dresdner Kleinwort Benson,

the UK's favourite research house in last year, dropped to sixth. Panmure Gordon and Henderson Crosthwaite fell out of the research top 10, with Schroders Securities and Charterhouse Tiney taking their place.

Although both Barclays and NatWest have said that uncertainty over the future of their equity operations hit profits during 1997, the two banks still fared well in the eyes of UK companies.

NatWest Markets, which last year sold its cash equities business to Bankers Trust, came fourth in the research top ten, two positions better than in 1996. BZW Securities, now owned by Credit Suisse First Boston, came seventh.

CRI also surveyed UK attitudes to EMU, and found the sentiment to be "broadly positive". But despite warm feelings towards EMU, many companies are ill-prepared.

Just 1 per cent of companies had specific arrangements already in place, and more than half had yet to begin their preparations in earnest.

Top securities houses for research 1997

1 (3)	Merrill Lynch
2 (2)	SBC Warburg Dillon Read
3 (4=)	UBS Securities
4 (6)	NatWest Markets
5 (4=)	HSBC James Capel
6 (1)	Dresdner Kleinwort Benson
7 (7)	BZW Securities
8 (8)	ABN Amro Hoare Govett
9 (-)	Schroders Securities
10 (11=)	Charterhouse Tiney

1996 positions in parentheses
Source: 1997 Annual Broker Survey, Consensus Research International

Abbey National faces £1bn debt exposure in Asia

Abbey National is understood to be carrying an exposure to South Korea of anywhere between £600m and £1bn, all of it in the form of government bonds. The bank is also thought to have reduced its exposure to Korea and the Asian region generally by about £1bn in the middle of last year, fearing that a number of Tiger economies were in danger of meltdown.

The bank confirmed yesterday that it held some assets in South Korea, although a spokeswoman said they represented less than one per cent of its total assets, which stand at £13.3bn.

She added: "These are high quality assets with the majority of them guaranteed by the state. We have not suffered any losses as a result and we do not expect to suffer any in the future but we are monitoring the situation carefully."

The bank later said that all

its exposure to South Korea was in the form of sovereign debt adding that it had no exposure to corporate bonds or any currency exposure since any government bonds bought in the local Korean currency, the won, would have been hedged in dollars or sterling.

Abbey National unwound a number of investments in Asia held in the form of asset backed securities, treasury bills and government bonds last summer.

As a result it managed to reduce its exposure to the region before its economies began to crash last autumn.

The bank has a large treasury operation which controls £62bn of assets. There had been speculation in the market that Abbey had investments in Korean corporate bonds, financed through the issue of its own paper. However, the bank insisted that all its bond holdings were sovereign.

Abbey, which reports its results on 26 February, also has some exposure in the inter-bank market in Asia, mainly through loans to Japanese banks.

According to estimates by Salomon Smith Barney, British banks may have total exposure of \$5.3bn (£3.6bn) in Korea and \$4bn in Indonesia. Salomon estimates that HSBC is the most exposed with \$3.4bn of loans to the two countries.

- Michael Harrison

British Biotech slumps on news of drug launch delay

British Biotech's shares crashed by 41p to 92p yesterday, their lowest level for more than two years, after it announced that the European launch of Zaccutex, its acute pancreatitis treatment, would be severely delayed.

European regulators want to wait for the results of a trial of 1,500 patients, designed to determine whether Zaccutex can save lives, before deciding whether to sanction the drug. British Biotech was hoping that

Zaccutex would be approved by this spring. However, the trial is unlikely to be completed before the end of the year.

Dr Keith McCullagh, British Biotech's chief executive said: "This is disappointing for shareholders who were expecting approval. But this share price fall is based on sentiment. The decision doesn't affect the long term prospects of bringing this drug to the market."

Analysts were concerned that

the delay eliminates any chance of British Biotech making a profit for the next few years. But they pointed out that the group's real attraction is marimastat, the potential blockbuster cancer drug. British Biotech confirmed that trials of marimastat were still on track and should be completed by early in 1999.

Concerns about delays has caused British Biotech's share price to collapse from a peak of 326.5p.

- Andrew Yates

STOCK MARKETS

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5806.40	10.50	0.18	5815.10	4189.10	3.15
FTSE 250	4858.00	20.20	0.41	4863.80	4384.20	3.16
FTSE 350	2699.80	6.10	0.23	2699.00	2075.70	3.14
FTSE All Share	2599.85	6.26	0.24	2598.12	2056.07	3.14
FTSE SmallCap	2403.30	10.10	0.42	2407.40	2182.10	2.55
FTSE AIM	1303.60	5.40	0.42	1340.50	1220.20	3.11
FTSE AIM	966.90	3.10	0.32	1138.00	665.90	1.04
Dow Jones	8100.06	-28.15	-0.35	8299.03	6356.78	1.70
Nikkei	17003.30	120.68	0.72	20910.79	14488.21	0.90
Hang Seng	10442.13	139.52	1.35	16820.31	7908.13	3.76
Dax	4548.46	61.51	1.37	4592.82	3088.58	1.70

INTEREST RATES

Short sterling	UK 10 year gilt	US long bond
1 month 1 yr 5 yr 10 yr	1 month 1 yr 5 yr 10 yr	1 month 1 yr 5 yr 10 yr
UK 7.56 1.25 7.50 0.72	UK 5.93 0.08 5.66 -0.20	US 6.57 -0.90 5.88 -0.88
US 0.85 0.35 0.81 0.25	2.02 -0.53 2.84 -0.51	2 Index 106.20 +0.10 96.90
Germany 3.52 0.38 3.79 0.57	5.11 -0.56 5.71 -0.81	

CURRENCIES

£/\$	DM/£	¥/£
1.6541 -0.34c	1.6378	0.6046 +0.12p
1.6378	0.6046 +0.12p	0.8108
2.9615 -2.10p	2.7049	1.7905 -0.71p
2.7049	1.7905 -0.71p	1.8453
204.48 -40.80	203.15	123.62 +0.01
203.15	123.62 +0.01	123.41
106.20 +0.10	96.90	\$ Index 106.00 -1.00 102.60

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.35	Italy (lira)	2.864
Austria (schillings)	20.29	Japan (yen)	202.14
Belgium (francs)	59.68	Malta (lira)	0.63
Canada (\$)	2.33	Netherlands (guilders)	3.25
Cyprus (pounds)	0.85	Norway (kroner)	12.08
Denmark (kroner)	11.07	Portugal (escudos)	202.49
Finland (markka)	6.81	Spain (pesetas)	243.80
France (francs)	9.68	South Africa (rand)	7.79
Germany (marks)	2.90	Sweden (kroner)	12.96
Greece (drachmas)	458.82	Switzerland (francs)	2.34
Hong Kong (\$)	12.40	Turkey (lira)	35,323
Ireland (pounds)	1.15	USA (\$)	1.61

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

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OUTLOOK ON A LANDMARK FOR THE UK SOFTWARE GROUP, TELEPHONY PLANS OF BRITISH GAS, AND MONSOON COMING TO MARKET

Challenge of the US giants beckons for Misys

If you haven't already heard of Misys, it's time to wake up. This is Britain's very own Microsoft. It may not yet be a household name, but its stock market value is £2.8bn, which means that when the committee that decides on these things sits down next month, it's likely that Misys will become the first information technology company to be granted a place in the FTSE 100 index.

True, joining the Footsie is a largely symbolic event. But nothing could more elegantly describe the changing face of the British economy. Misys - a company which is less than two decades old and joined the stock market as a £10m tiddler 11 years ago - is now worth more than such stalwarts of British industry as British Steel and Blue Circle. The company that is most likely to drop out of the Footsie to make way for it is Sir Stanley Kalms' Dixons. Misys is no exception; thrusting rival software groups such as Sage, Sema and Logica are only a few steps behind.

So how has Misys done it? The answer is a combination of acquisitions and growing demand. One part of its growth was as a consolidator in the banking software market, hoovering up a number of small niche players and selling their products to banks around the world. At the same time, however, it has also had the benefit of expanding markets as banks have rushed to automate every conceivable aspect of their businesses.

Careful management of cash has been a hallmark, a technique Kevin Lomax, the chairman, must have learnt at the feet of

his previous employer Lord Hanson. Then there's the following wind of a very generous share price rating. Misys shares now trade on a multiple of 38 times next year's forecast earnings.

Still, let's not get carried away. Viewed from the US, Misys and the rest of the British IT industry are small fry, dwarfed by Microsoft, Intel and a whole raft of companies you've never even heard of. To be a force in the global software industry, Misys is going to have to become many times larger. Even so this is something of a defining moment for the British stock market. At last, an IT company in the FTSE 100.

British Gas lines up for phone wars

Who'd want to be a telephone company? Well, quite a lot actually. Despite advances in technology which industry executives say will eventually deliver free or near free voice telephony, there were more than 200 licensed telecom operators in the UK at the last count and rising. Now British Gas wants to add itself to this burgeoning list of competitors.

One way of looking at this is that it must be mad. Discounted telephony is now so common and the market place becoming so competitive that it is a wonder anyone makes money out of it at all any longer. The newspapers have become full of special slashed priced offers. Enhanced

competition is only part of the story. New technology should in any case be causing the cost of voice telephony to plummet.

The internet already offers limitless written communication for only marginal cost. In the last few years voice communication over the internet has also become possible, though quality is still poor. At the same time, however, the technology used to transmit traffic across conventional networks has advanced to a level which makes it possible to deliver services for a tiny fraction of present costs. This is because of the almost limitless capacity of new networks for simultaneous transmission of voice and data.

The only thing that stops the price falling to virtually nothing immediately is that the world is still largely dominated by national monopolies with big overheads and a huge capital investment to recoup in an ageing infrastructure. As competition begins to bite that will change. These monopolies will have to start cannibalising their own customer base with new low cost telephony to survive.

For the moment there is not much sign of BT's profits suffering from all this. BT seems able to grow its volume and revenues at a pace which outstrips its fall in market share. But it cannot long remain thus. The basic business of transmitting voice and data will eventually become pure, low cost, utility stuff. Because of the ability of modern networks to offer limitless capacity, it may even have to sold at a loss. Telephone companies will make their money not out of the business of sell-

ing conventional telephony but out of value added services, and by persuading other product and service providers to sell their wares via the telephone.

In a curious way, all this helps explain why British Gas should want to enter this cut throat business. Telephony will become just another string to its multi utility bow, and if the most valuable thing in business is knowledge of the customer, British Gas and its parent, Centrica, will have it in spades. Utility infrastructures and billing systems are set to become mere conduits for the sale of a huge range of other products and services.

Monsoon prompts worries on price

So it was second time lucky after all for Peter Simon, the founder of the Monsoon fashion chain. The former encyclopaedia salesman, who had to pull the group's float 18 months ago, has signed up a blue chip register of shareholders at the second attempt and got a top of the range price into the bargain. The Armani-clad retailer is now £88m richer and he still has three quarters of a business worth £352m.

Institutional investors seem to have bought the story, the question for private investors is whether they should do the same.

This is a strong brand with a 12 year record of unbroken profit growth and a market position that seems immune to the volatile end of high fashion. But there are

concerns. The key worry is the price. At 198p Monsoon has been floated at a premium to the market and at a staggering three and half times sales. This leaves little margin for error. The second concern is Monsoon's margins, which at the gross level are a staggering 62.6 per cent. Not much scope for improvement there.

The final issue is the abandonment of the float in 1996 over the ultimate beneficiaries of a Maltese-registered trust which owned two thirds of the shares. Mr Simon said then that he was not a beneficiary. He later retracted that statement by saying there were certain circumstances under which he might have benefited.

Even though all this is now in the past, he still will not say how the trust was set up, who its beneficiaries were, or how he managed to buy out its interest. This trust has now been unwound and another trust administered on Mr Simon's behalf will control three quarters of the business after it floats. So Mr Simon can legitimately claim he's removed all remaining concerns. But if all this is now irrelevant, why is Mr Simon so reluctant to explain it?

Outside investors will find themselves a powerless minority in a company dominated by a founder entrepreneur. The history of such companies generally does not inspire confidence. This is not to denigrate Monsoon, which is a good business, or Mr Simon who created and developed it. It may well be that all these concerns prove groundless and that indeed the stock will soar. Even so there's enough risk there to justify extreme caution.

Misys set to be the first IT company in the FTSE 100

Misys, the fast-growing software group, is set to become the first British information technology company to join the FTSE 100 when the members of the index of leading shares are reviewed next month. Peter Thal Larsen reports on how the City has warned to the sector.

Shares in Misys have risen strongly in the past two months as investors have responded positively to the creation of a separate IT sector by the Stock Exchange.

As the largest constituent of the index, Misys has attracted a lot of the attention from institutional investors seeking to raise their exposure to the sector. Since the index was announced early in December, Misys shares have gained almost 50 per cent in value.

The shares rose strongly again early yesterday, but fell back when executive chairman Kevin Lomax and several other directors revealed that they had sold some of their shares at 235p. They coded the day up 10p at 250.2p.

Still, at yesterday's closing price Misys is worth almost £2.8bn, making it the 93rd largest company in the UK and virtually guaranteeing it

formal entry into the FTSE 100. Misys' inclusion will be a symbolic moment for the British IT industry. The market has enjoyed explosive growth in the past 15 years as more and more companies have introduced information technology into their businesses. Demand has grown even faster in recent years as firms attempt to prepare their systems for the millennium and European monetary union.

However, many in the industry feel that the City has been slow to recognise the attractions of IT companies, and that this has starved them of funding and hampered their development. Until recently, British IT companies were valued less highly

than their US counterparts, prompting several groups to bypass the Loodoo market entirely and list on Nasdaq.

But Mr Lomax believes the City's aversion to hi-tech companies has eased. "The quality of research is improving and investors are getting better served," he said.

Formed in 1979, Misys floated on the Unlisted Securities Market in March 1987 at a share price of 95p and a market value of less than £10m. Eleven years on, the company is worth 280 times as much and its share price has seen a 26-fold increase.

The company started out selling software for the insurance industry, but most of its

growth has come from banking software. "We noticed that the software industry was very fragmented while the customers were willing to pay very large," said Mr Lomax.

Mr Lomax ascribed Misys' success to sticking closely to its business model and carefully controlling its cash flow, which it has used to fund acquisitions. Since joining the stock market, Misys has done roughly 30 deals, ranging from tiny software operations to last year's £84m acquisition of US healthcare software group Medica.

"Anybody who can grow a company that quickly deserves considerable praise," said industry analyst Richard Holway. Outlook, this page

Monsoon comes to market at second attempt

Monsoon, the women's fashion retailer, has succeeded in its second attempt to float on the stock market. The group's advisers yesterday announced that the institutional placing had been over-subscribed at an offer price of 198p. This values the group at £352m.

There had been concerns that investors would spurn the float because of the difficult retail climate and concerns about the group's high margins and growth plans. The group's unsuccessful attempt to come to the market in 1996 was also a concern for some. The float had to be pulled due to concerns

over the ultimate beneficiaries of a Maltese-based trust which owned the bulk of the shares. This time, the group's adviser, NatWest Markets, is said to have assembled a "blue-chip shareholder register".

However, some still expressed concerns over the pricing. "They are floating it at three-and-half times turnover, which looks quite remarkable," said one senior fund manager who decided not to invest. Another, who also decided not to buy the shares, said: "It's a long trade company. Fashion is wax and wane and companies get it wrong. We weren't enthused by it."

The price gives the shares a forward price ratio of about 18. This is a slight discount to the retail sector but a premium to the market. SG Securities said the price left "no margin for error" and claimed a price of 150p would have been more realistic.

The float will net the Monsoon founder Peter Simon a windfall of £88m. Mr Simon and his family will still own 74.6 per cent of the company following the flotation. No money is being raised.

Dealings in the shares are expected to start next Wednesday. - Nigel Cope
Outlook, this page

Sale ends Sears' shoe empire

Sears, the troubled retail group, finally closed the chapter on its disastrous footwear business yesterday with the sale of Cable & Co to US group, Nine West.

The deal netted Sears a profit of £0.6m, making it only the second shoe format it has managed to sell without incurring substantial losses. The deal means that Sears has sold 10 footwear brands in the last few years, at a net loss of £150m and a cost of 2,400 jobs.

It marks the end of a footwear empire built up by the late Sir Charles Clore in the 1950s, which grew to its peak in the 1980s when it had 2,500 shops. At that stage it accounted for one in four of all shoe sales in Britain.

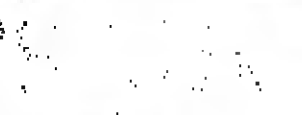
Asked how a company came to fritter away a position of such market leadership, Sears' chairman, Sir Bob Reid, said: "At the time the business was state of the art but then the market moved on. The way people are buying shoes is changing. They don't use traditional shoe shops so much anymore but buy shoes along with their clothing. The business had a whole bunch of brands that weren't working any more."

He said British people had become a nation of training shoe and sports shoe wearers. They were less interested in visiting specialist shoe retailers such as Shoe Express and Dolcis but went to places like Marks & Spencer, Next and sports shops instead.

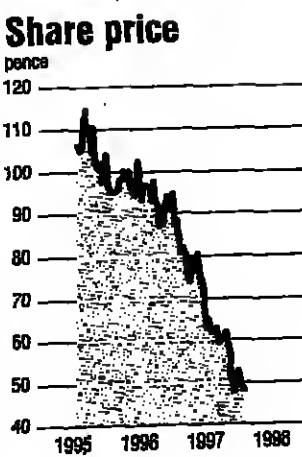
Sears' management has been criticised for being too slow to see changes in footwear fashion and for changing its retail formats too often. But Sir Bob said he looked forward to

The rise and fall of Sears' shoe empire

1991	John Sears sets up Trueform, making shoes
1993	Charles Clore buys Sears, Freeman, Hardy Willis (HW), Saxone, Curless
1997	Establishes British Shoe Corporation (BSC)
1998-97	Sears has 2,500 shops, with 25% of shoe market
1998	CEO Liam Strong decides to dispose of BSC after profits slump
Aug 96	Sells FHW, Trueform and Mansfield to Facia for £16m loss
Feb 96	Sells Saxone and Curless to Facia. Net loss: £30m
July 96	Facia stores return to Sears after going into administration
Aug 96	Sells Hush Puppy to Style. Net profit: £0.6m
Aug 97	Sells Saxone to Style for net loss of £2m
Aug 97	Sells concessions business to Nine West. Net loss of £2m
Sept 97	Liam Strong quits. David James takes over
Dec 97	Sells Dolcis to Alton. Net loss: £13m
Dec 97	Sells Shoe Express to Philip Green. Net loss: £66m
Dec 97	Sells Shoe City to sold to Brantano. Net loss: £27m
Feb 98	Sells Cable & Co to Nine West for £0.6m profit.



David James



German unemployment reaches post-war record

Germany's unemployment rate hit a new post-war record of 12.6 per cent last month, or 4.8 million people, but the increase from 11.8 per cent the previous month was due entirely to a seasonal rise in joblessness in construction. Adjusting for seasonal variations, unemployment fell by 72,000, its first decline for 10 months. However, economists did not see this as the start of an improving trend, and it will do nothing to alleviate the mounting political pressure on the government to take decisive action to cut unemployment. The Bundesbank left German interest rates unchanged yesterday.

Asian miracle 'not over'

A high-level meeting in London of officials from Asian and European countries ended yesterday with a fairly optimistic assessment of the fall-out from Asia's financial crisis. The concluding statement from the two-day meeting, preparing for the Asian and European heads of government summit in April, said the impact on Asia itself would be "material but manageable". Taking a longer-term view, according to Nigel Wicks, the senior Treasury official chairing the meeting, the Asian miracle had not ended.

Far East crisis hits Bass

Bass, the leisure giant, said that the economic crisis in the Far East had taken its toll on its hotel business. Revenues per available room fell 12 per cent in Asia in the first 16 weeks of its financial year. Sir Ian Prosser, the chairman, said fewer people were travelling within Asia. Bass said the group as a whole had traded in line with expectations. Bass shares closed down 2p at 942p.

KPMG merger inquiry

The planned \$18bn merger between the Big Six accounting and management consulting firms KPMG and Ernst & Young is to be subjected to a full investigation under the European Union's merger regulations. Both firms said they had expected the announcement, but were confident that the European Commission's stage-two inquiry would demonstrate that the deal to create the world's largest professional services firm should be allowed to go ahead. The Commission announced its investigation into the proposed merger between two other Big Six firms, Coopers & Lybrand and Price Waterhouse, last month.

Names fight NU on homes

Two hundred Lloyd's names will today issue a writ against Norwich Union in an effort to stop their homes being repossessed. Norwich Union is seeking to recoup the value of payments it has made to cover underwriting losses for the names. The names had bought policies from NU which allowed them temporarily to put off paying for losses while NU paid them. As security, NU had a charge against their homes. Geoffrey Hall, of the Norwich Union Action Group, will allege that NU concealed information it had about forthcoming losses when it sold the policies between 1987 and 1992. NU declined to comment.

chief financial officer, said the UK shoe market was a good opportunity. "We are experiencing great success in the UK since we moved in."

Nine West has 1,450 stores worldwide, including 1,100 in the US, and had group sales last year of \$1.8bn (£1.1bn).

Sears will now concentrate on the demerger of its Selfridges and Freemans businesses, which will leave the group with only its womenswear chains such as Wallis. Sears shares rose 0.5p to 46.75p.

- Nigel Cope

NEW INVESTMENT RATES Effective from 6 February 1998

ANNUAL RATES	1 YEAR	2 YEAR
Scarborough 120 & 120 By Post	7.70	6.16
£50,000 - £250,000	7.60	6.08
£25,000 - £49,999.99	7.50	6.00
£10,000 - £24,999.99	7.40	5.92
£5,000 - £9,999.99		
Scarborough 100 & 100 By Post	6.85	5.48
£50,000 - £250,000	6.75	5.40
£25,000 - £49,999.99	6.70	5.36
£10,000 - £24,999.99		
£5,000 - £9,999.99		
Scarborough 75 & 75 By Post	5.00	4.00
£50,000 - £250,000	4.95	3.96
£25,000 - £49,999.99	4.90	3.92
£10,000 - £24,999.99	4.85	3.88
£5,000 - £9,999.99	4.80	3.84
Scarborough Fifty & Fifty By Post	4.35	3.48
£50,000 - £250,000	4.30	3.44
£25,000 - £49,999.99	4.25	3.40
£10,000 - £24,999.99	4.20	3.36
£5,000 - £9,999.99	4.15	3.32
Scarborough 30 & 30 By Post*	7.60	6.08
£1,000 - £999.99	7.20	5.76
Scarborough Standard	3.60	2.88
£25,000 - £250,000	3.50	2.80
£10,000 - £24,999.99	3.40	2.72
£5,000 - £9,999.99	3.30	2.64
£1,000 - £999.99	3.20	2.56
Keefe Savings Bond & Bond By Post**	6.85	5.48
Keefe Instant Account†	5.05	4.04
£2,500 - £250,000	5.00	4.00
£1,000 - £24,999.99	4.95	3.96
Keefe's By Post††	5.05	4.04
£2,500 - £250,000	5.00	4.00
£1,000 - £24,999.99	4.95	3.96
Young Super saver	5.60	4.48
£1,000 - £5,000	5.50	4.40
£250 - £999.99	5.40	4.32
£100 - £249.99	5.30	4.24
£10 - £99.99	5.20	4.16
Super saver (rates include a 1% gross interest bonus)**	4.10	3.28
£25,000 - £250,000	4.05	3.23
£10,000 - £24,999.99	4.00	3.18
£5,000 - £9,999.99	3.95	3.13
£2,500 - £2,499.99	3.90	3.08
£1,000 - £249.99	3.85	3.03
First Post Plus	4.20	3.36
£50,000 - £250,000	4.15	3.32
£25,000 - £49,999.99	4.10	3.28
£10,000 - £24,999.99	4.05	3.23
£5,000 - £9,999.99	4.00	3.18
£1,000 - £999.99	3.95	3.13
Scarborough First Post*	3.75	3.00
£25,000 - £250,000	3.70	2.96
£10,000 - £24,999.99	3.65	2.92
£5,000 - £9,999.99	3.60	2.88
£1,000 - £999.99	3.55	2.84
Instant Access By Post	5.90	4.72
£1,000 - £250,000		
Scarborough TESSA	4.45	3.56
Keefe's Bonus Interest	5.80	4.64
£2,500 - £250,000	5.75	4.60
£1,000 - £24,999.99	5.70	4.56
£500 - £999.99		

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01723 500616

The interest rates on all other accounts are unchanged. *Account suspended temporarily for new investors. **Minimum investment for a new account is £1,000 and the minimum liability for monthly interest is £1,000. †Minimum investment for a new account is £200, with the exception of that figure. ‡Monthly payments are subject to a minimum of £15. ††Only available to customers with a matured Scarborough TESSA Account. Monthly payments are subject to a minimum of £15. ‡‡Only available to customers with a matured Scarborough First Post Account. Monthly payments are subject to a minimum of £15. †††Only available to customers with a matured Scarborough First Post Account. Monthly payments are subject to a minimum of £15. ‡‡‡Only available to customers with a matured Scarborough First Post Account. Monthly payments are subject to a minimum of £15. ††††Only available to customers with a matured Scarborough First Post Account. 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THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Picture remains unclear for ICI

Imperial Chemical Industries has undergone such a year of transition that its 1997 results are of limited value either as a comparison with previous performance or as a yardstick for how well it may do in the future. Profits before tax and exceptional gains came in at £385 against £603m. This was towards the bottom end of the range but not wildly unexpected given the clobbering ICI took from exchange rates and its soaring interest bill. The strong pound wiped £190m off earnings while the acquisition of Unilever's specialty chemicals business helped debt levels to peak at £6.3bn, increasing the interest charge for the year from £89m to £251m.

The revolving door at 9, Millbank has seen £2.5bn worth of businesses sold off, a further £1.2bn of sales contracted and perhaps another £800m of disposals to come this year as ICI sheds its industrial chemicals image and concentrates on a portfolio of paints, flavourings, fragrances and fine chemicals.

The result is a riot of continuing operations, discontinued operations, continuing operations to be discontinued, exceptional and goodwill write-offs. ICI's decision to squirrel away £440m of the £777m profit it made on disposals last year and use the money as provisions against losses expected on the upcoming sale of Tioxide and explosives means that the picture this year should look a lot clearer.

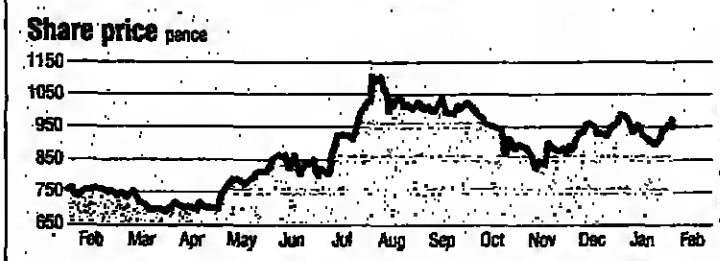
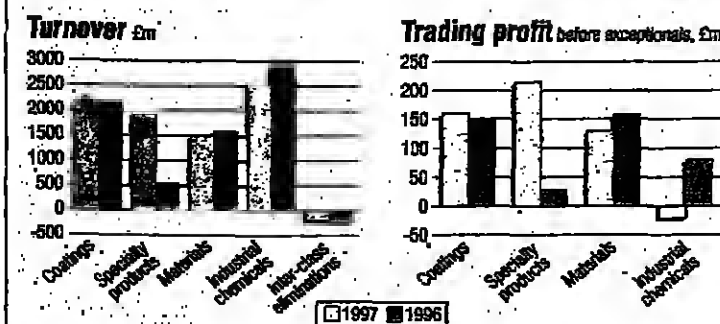
The combination of the Asian downturn, slowing world growth and unfavourable exchange rates will make for another tough year in 1998. But the good news is that ICI's exposure to the Far East has more than halved to 12 per cent of turnover following the sale of ICI Australia. Meanwhile, the exit from industrial chemicals will reduce currency exposure while the nature of the product range means that ICI manufactures much more of its output in local markets.

The 50 per cent jump in fourth quarter profits showed the contribution from the Unilever acquisition flowing through, particularly National Starch where operating margins are approaching 15 per cent. However, the task will be to achieve double-digit margins in the other businesses. Debt levels this year will fall to £2.6bn and perhaps lower, sharply reducing the interest bill while the clearance of underperforming bulk chemical rump, should help earnings. The shares, up 39p to 978p, put ICI on a forward multiple of 18.5 times earnings supposing profits around the £600m mark this year. Still scope for buying.

ICI: At a glance

Market value: £3.62bn, share price 978p

Trading record	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£bn)	10.27	10.5	11.1
Profit before tax and exceptional gains (£m)	951	603	385
Earnings per share (p)	78.7	48.6	33.0
Dividends per share (p)	30	32	32



rest of the sector, delays in Zaccutex should have no impact on other companies' earnings prospects. It seems the only sensible way to approach biotech shares is to spread the risks by buying a basket of international stocks.

Hardy's gas find lights the gloom

Hardy Oil & Gas lit up an otherwise gloomy sector yesterday with news of its bumper gas find in Pakistan. Investors, who have been watching share prices fall across the board as a result of the plunging oil price, reacted with predictable enthusiasm, pushing Hardy's share price up 37p, or almost 15 per cent, to 285p.

Is this rise justified? Well, perhaps. Hardy reckons its share of the field, which will fall to about 24 per cent once negotiations with the Pakistani government are completed, adds the equivalent of 40-80 million barrels of oil to its reserves. Even at the bottom end of the range, that's an increase of 24 per cent. Demand for the gas in Pakistan is strong, and long term there's even the possibility - politics permitting - of exporting it to India. Hardy should be able to finance the cost of developing the well without loading up its balance sheet with debt.

But oil exploration companies are valued as much by sentiment as by hard analysis. Because Hardy has managed one big find, investors will be more willing to bet on it repeating the trick. The other unanswered question is just how large a field Hardy is sitting on. Until it does more tests, no one will really be sure. But the chances are that the current estimates are conservative.

Of course, there are plenty of risks. The tests may prove to be bogus, while the political sands could always shift against Hardy. But yesterday's share price move only begins to reverse six months of dramatic share price underperformance.

Investors will still remember the example of Cairn Energy, which watched its share price rise almost sevenfold in 1996 on a series of oil discoveries in the same part of the world. The shares remain a punt, but at 285p the downside is probably protected while the potential upside is huge.

A reminder of the biotech risks

If anybody was in any doubt that investing in biotech shares was as risky as roulette, yesterday's announcement from British Biotech was a timely reminder. Its share tumbled by 41p to 92p on news that the European launch of Zaccutex, its treatment for acute pancreatitis, will be delayed for a year.

The news is hardly catastrophic for the group. After all Zaccutex is far less important than marimastat, the potentially block-busting cancer drug, which British Biotech is pushing through clinical trials. And the delay

in marketing Zaccutex will knock just £8m off analysts' profit forecasts for the year to April 1999, hardly enough to justify the £270m drop in the value of the group yesterday.

But biotech stocks are ruled by sentiment. It is hard to believe that less than two years ago British Biotech was valued at more than £2bn and vying for a place in the FTSE 100. Delays in product launches had a devastating effect on the share price, and the group is now valued at just £607m.

Problems at British Biotech have had a huge knock-on effect. Zaccutex would have been the first treatment produced by a biotech company to reach the market and start producing a profit. A successful launch would have buoyed the whole sector, but the delay is a bitter pill to swallow and caused biotech shares to tumble again.

That said, nothing has really changed. If marimastat gets through clinical trials it could generate sales of £1bn; if it doesn't the shares will probably sink without trace. You pay your money and take your chance. As for the

Halifax scraps charges for mortgage indemnities

Halifax, the retail bank, yesterday stopped charging customers for a highly controversial form of insurance which protects mortgage lenders from losing money on repossession - at the expense of their customers. As Andrew Verity reports, it may force its rivals to follow suit.

Halifax now joins Cheltenham & Gloucester and Mortgage Express among the few who do not insist on the insurance.

Mortgage indemnity guarantees (MIGs), which are paid for by the customer but protect only the lender, added up to £1.020 to a mortgage worth £100,000 until yesterday. Now Halifax will charge customers nothing for loans below 90

per cent of the house value. Financial advisers and consumer groups have become increasingly angry at the sale of MIGs. Lenders typically buy the product from just one insurer. They also gain commission on its "sale" to the customer.

Alistair Conway, managing director of Clark Conway, an independent financial adviser, said: "Most buyers do not understand what MIGs are and are shocked when they discover the cost. People are also shocked to find they could still be chased for losses many years after losing their homes."

When repossession grew sharply in 1992, lenders frequently lost money as repossessed houses were sold at a loss. The greater risk caused MIG premiums to rise. With the housing market now bouncing back, advisers claim MIG premiums have failed to fall. Mortgage protection has be-

come increasingly controversial both for lenders and the Government.

In a separate development, Liberal Democrat MPs have accused the Government of pushing people on income support into unnecessary mortgage arrears.

The Government last week admitted it based mortgage interest benefit on an interest rate used by the 30 biggest building societies. The Lib Dems said claimants were losing money because most lenders are now banks, charging higher interest.

The Government takes at least three months to change its rate of interest. It currently stands at 7.97 - against a market rate of 8.7.

Steven Webb, MP for Northavon, said: "I don't see why there shouldn't be a law saying as soon as official interest rates rise, so does the benefit."

Texas Utilities claims Energy bid would be in the clear

Texas Utilities, the Dallas power supplier, considering a bid for Energy Group, yesterday pledged that any takeover offer should not meet with opposition from regulators.

Jarrell Gibbs, Texas' deputy chairman, revealed that the group had met with Professor Stephen Littlechild, the electricity regulator, on Monday to put the company's case. A three-way bid battle for Energy Group remains a possibility, after PacificCorp of the US this week launched a raised £4.06bn bid for the company, which owns Eastern Electricity.

Mr Gibbs said there was no reason why a Texas bid should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. PacificCorp was cleared by the MMC to bid for Energy Group last December. "We will satisfy any of the concerns the MMC expressed and maintain Eastern's credit rating," said Mr Gibbs.

Texas also hit back at claims that the company's environmental record made an MMC referral more likely. The company is thought to be some way off making a formal bid, which could involve selling its Peabody coal business in the US.

- Chris Godsmark

Cable group in £375m deal

Consolidation in the UK cable industry continued yesterday when operator NTL announced an agreed £600m (£375m) takeover bid for Comcast UK, its rival. The companies, which are both quoted on the Nasdaq stock market, have been left out of recent merger activity.

The deal casts doubt on the ongoing negotiations between NTL and TeleWest, the UK's second largest cable operator. Talks have been continuing since last August, and are widely thought to have stalled.

TeleWest and Comcast co-operate in two cable franchises, Cable London and Birmingham Cable. TeleWest pointed out that it has the right to acquire Comcast's interests in those franchises if the company changes hands, and said it was considering its options. However, analysts said TeleWest's heavy debt load would prevent it from paying cash for the stakes.

- Peter Thal Larsen

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- 2 Years Interest Free Credit
- FREE EPSON PRINTER (limited to first 1000 only)



FREE EPSON COLOUR PRINTER
First 1000 orders only Epson Stylus 300 colour inkjet printer (normal price £161.58). Select required PC cable, 200M-2 model comes with higher spec Epson 400 printer.

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 - Glasgow: 100 Buchanan Street, G1 1PU
 - Leeds: 100 The Arcade, LS1 1HA
 - Liverpool: 100 Bold Street, L2 2YH
 - Newcastle: 100 Eldon Square, NE1 7RU
 - Nottingham: 100 The Arcade, NG1 1AA
 - Sheffield: 100 The Arcade, S1 1AA
 - Southampton: 100 The Arcade, SO1 1AA
 - Stoke-on-Trent: 100 The Arcade, ST1 1AA
 - Sunderland: 100 The Arcade, SR1 1AA
 - Torquay: 100 The Arcade, TQ1 1AA
 - Warrington: 100 The Arcade, WA1 1AA
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FreePhone Time Now!
0800 77 1107
Sales Lines Open: Monday - Friday 9.30am - 7.00pm, Saturday 9.00am - 6.00pm

Offer Ends 7th February

200M-2 Model
£1291.33 +VAT

233M-2 Model
£1491.33 +VAT

COMPUTER SYSTEMS

£10 Conran lunch

The Independent and Independent on Sunday in association with Terence Conran are delighted to offer readers the opportunity to enjoy lunch or early evening supper at six of London's top restaurants throughout January and February for £10

From Monday January 5th until Saturday February 28th, the following establishments are offering readers a two course lunch or early evening supper for just £10 per person.

How to Book

To participate in the offer simply collect one token (tokens will be printed every day until Saturday February 28th) and then telephone the restaurant of your choice quoting yourself as an Independent diner. On your arrival at the restaurant you should present your token in order to qualify for the offer. Each token is valid for a complete table booking. The tokens will be valid for one week only, and will be dated accordingly. To continue to participate in the offer, simply collect a token from the week in which you wish to dine. Pre-booking is essential and all bookings are subject to availability.

A special discount is available on selected items in the Bluebird and Le Pont de la Tour shops on presentation of the token.



The Independent offer is available at the following restaurants:

Bluebird 350 King's Road, London, SW3 5UJ
0171 559 1000
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm

Blue Print Café The Design Museum, 28 Shad Thames, London, SE1 2YE
0171 378 7031
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm*

Le Pont de la Tour Bar & Grill 36d Shad Thames, London, SE1 2YE
0171 403 8403
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm

Mezzo 100 Wardour Street, London, W1V 3LE
0171 314 4000
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm
closed Saturday lunchtime, open Sunday 12pm - 4pm

Quaglino's 16 Bury Street, St James's, London, SW1Y 6AL
0171 930 6767
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 5.30pm - 6.30pm

Zinc Bar & Grill 21 Heddon Street, London, W1R 7LF
0171 255 8899
The special 3 course menu is available between 12noon and 7pm between Monday and Wednesday the offer is extended until 11pm*

The offer is available 7 days a week at all six restaurants
* Closed from 6pm on Sunday Offer not available after 6pm on February 14

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN
WILLCOCK

The writing has been on the wall for the name since last year, when HSBC said that as it integrated the equity distribution business with the investment banking business, it would review the use of the separate James Capel trade name.

It's hard to imagine such a career now in a City dominated by spotty teenage scribblers. James Capel & Co was snapped up by HSBC in 1986 as part of "Big Bang". Mr Capel's name will live on however, with the private client business James Capel Investment Management.

According to the *South China Morning Post*, the woman, Wong Yuet-ngan, said she represented Li Ka-shing's Hutchison Whampoa group. She had to fight off fierce competition from Sino Land, which opened the bidding at HK\$560m. She entered the fray when the price for the 57,000 sq ft site stood at HK\$620m,

The stayers from last year include Richard Coleman of Merrill Lynch in Banks; Robert Donald of Schroders in Building and Construction; James Culverwell of Merrill Lynch in Pharmaceuticals and Healthcare; John Richards of NatWest Markets in Retail; Clive Anderson of Merrill Lynch in Transport; and Leslie Athanopoulou of IHS in Water.

Simon Lewis, the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) past president, has written to me saying the search is on for a new IPR director-general to represent the spin doctors of the UK: "The IPR is looking for a new director-general to drive forward an ambitious development plan into, and beyond, the 21st century."

Speaking of spin doctors, Leigh Bruce has left Salomon Brothers after seven years as its chief mouthpiece to take over the same function at Barclays Capital, the new, slimline BZW.

Mr Bruce will see familiar faces at his new Canary Wharf home. He used to work with Naguib Kheraj, Barclays Capital's chief operating officer, when they were at Salomon together.

No doubt Salomon's reputation as a heavyweight bond house helped Mr Bruce's selection. **Bob Diamond**, Barclays Capital's chief executive, said the bank has "an ambitious new focus on the global debt markets and Leigh has exactly the right combination of skills to help us achieve our objectives and develop the firm's brand around the world".

Leigh certainly has international credentials; at one point he was a correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor* in Athens, and has also worked for the BBC French Service and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Yoplait Dairy Crest, the joint venture company of Dairy Crest Group and Yoplait of France, has bought Raines, a family-owned dairy company, for £66.25m in cash. The deal is the first big acquisition made by Dairy Crest since its flotation in August 1996.

Raines is a leading supplier of fresh dairy products, covering yoghurt, cottage and soft cheeses, fresh cream, dressings, ice cream and desserts. To

Foreign Exchange Rates

businesses are largely complementary and this acquisition gives Yoplait Dairy Crest the opportunity to take a strong leadership position across the market."

Finance director Ian Laurie said the acquisition would be modestly earnings-enhancing in its first year. "Clearly we expect

“It gives the combined business a strong position in the large and growing fresh dairy products sector,” he said.

The fresh dairy products sector is worth about £1bn and is growing at about 10 per cent a year.

Dairy Crest also announced this morning it had negotiated an extension to YDC. YDC was formed in 1991 between Dairy Crest and Yoplait's parent company, Sodial, and today the two groups agreed to extend the joint venture by 10 years under a rolling 10-year renewal programme.

Country	Sterling Spots	1 month	3 month	Dollar Spots	1 month	3 month	D-Mark Spots
UK	100.00			0.6561	0.6560	0.6568	0.6560
Canada	2,445.4	2,442.5	2,438.2	147.4	147.0	147.5	0.8265
Australia	2,018.7	2,017.8	2,017.4	12,578	12,576	12,571	70,030
France	6,680.0	6,678.0	6,676.0	1,802.5	1,802.5	1,802.5	1,802.5
Germany	2,382.5	2,377.1	2,376.1	1,439.6	1,438.6	1,437.2	0.8162
Italy	11,275	11,294	11,173	5,532.1	5,530.6	5,527.1	35,318
Japan	1,457.6	1,457.1	1,456.1	1,003.5	1,003.5	1,003.5	1,003.5
Finland	8,689.4	8,694.1	8,689.2	5,498.1	5,499.6	5,498.5	3,686.5
Sweden	4,985.6	4,985.6	4,985.6	3,300.0	3,300.0	3,300.0	3,300.0
Switzerland	4,985.6	4,985.6	4,985.6	2,787.1	2,787.1	2,779.3	1,880.0
Greece	499.6	471.5	473.3	263.5	263.5	263.1	184.0
Spain	2,321.4	2,321.4	2,321.4	2,786.2	2,786.2	2,786.2	2,786.2
India	17,795	17,754	17,723	10,409	10,401	10,425	9,673.4
Indonesia	28,231	28,655	29,118	17,681	17,683	17,672	30,704
South Korea	2,321.4	2,321.4	2,321.4	2,786.2	2,786.2	2,786.2	2,786.2
Malaysia	6,495.6	6,491	6,508.8	3,329.0	3,327.3	3,349.0	2,897.2
Mexico	3,359.0			2,359.0			1,952.7
Philippines	3,359.0	3,349.1	3,350.0	2,359.0	2,355.1	2,350.0	1,952.7
New Zealand	2,192.5	2,192.5	2,192.5	0.9385	0.9379	0.9389	0.9392
Norway	3,359.0	3,359.0	3,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0
Portugal	3,359.0	3,359.0	3,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0
Saudi Arabia	3,359.0	3,359.0	3,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0
Singapore	3,359.0	3,359.0	3,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0
South Africa	3,359.0	3,359.0	3,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0
South Korea	3,359.0	3,359.0	3,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0
Taiwan	3,359.0	3,359.0	3,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0
Thailand	3,359.0	3,359.0	3,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0	2,359.0
U.S.	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
U.K.	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
West Germany	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
France	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
Italy	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
Japan	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
Sweden	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
Switzerland	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
Spain	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
India	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
Indonesia	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
South Korea	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
Malaysia	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
Mexico	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
Philippines	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0
New Zealand	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	18522	10000	Oman	65371	33850
Brazil	18605	1291	Pakistan	72227	44000
China	13702	82758	Philippines	67034	40500
Czech Rep	56330	34420	Poland	52490	33250
Egypt	56525	34012	Romania	63640	39000
France	228782	22975	Russia	39855	80330
Hungary	34423	20556	South Korea	28549	160400
Italy	64054	38700	Taiwan	54208	32750
Indonesia	165894	86000	Thailand	79530	48500
Japan	13035	03059	Turkey	34928	26000
Spain	13488	81480	U.K.	100	16730

UK	Germany	US	Japan
France	250%	850%	Discount
Intervention	450%	Discount	Belgium
Italy	Canada	Fed Funds	Discount
Netherlands	Prime	Spain	Central
Sw/Austria	550%	Repo	Switzerland
	Discount	Pave/Repo	Lombard
	350%	438%	330%

Bond Yields								
Country	3mth	chg	3 yr	chg	5 yr	chg	10 yr	chg
Australia	4.94	-0.01	4.92	-0.01	5.17	-0.02	5.52	-0.01
Belgium	3.50	-0.01	3.73	0.00	4.16	-0.01	4.55	0.00
Canada	4.48	-0.06	5.01	-0.01	4.93	0.00	5.16	0.01
France	4.21	-0.01	4.24	-0.01	4.31	0.00	4.66	0.00
Germany	3.00	-0.00	3.60	0.00	4.02	0.00	4.32	-0.01
Japan	3.53	0.00	3.80	0.01	3.89	0.01	4.57	0.01
Netherlands	4.21	-0.01	4.24	-0.01	4.31	0.00	4.66	0.00
UK	4.04	0.00	4.04	0.00	4.04	0.00	4.04	0.00
US	5.00	0.02	5.01	0.00	5.01	0.00	5.01	0.00
Sweden	4.47	-0.01	4.77	-0.01	4.78	0.00	4.56	0.00
Norway	3.47	0.00	3.73	0.00	4.09	0.01	4.58	0.01
Switzerland	3.47	0.00	3.73	0.00	4.09	0.01	4.58	0.01
Spain	4.00	0.00	4.00	0.00	4.00	0.00	4.00	0.00
Italy	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Portugal	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Greece	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Finland	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Denmark	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Ireland	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Belgium	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
France	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
UK	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
US	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Canada	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Australia	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Japan	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
South Africa	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Argentina	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Brazil	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Chile	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Colombia	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Costa Rica	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Cuba	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Czech Republic	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Denmark	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Ecuador	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
El Salvador	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Finland	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
France	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Germany	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Greece	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Hong Kong	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
India	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Indonesia	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00

	Overnight	1 week	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
	Bid Offer	Bid Offer	Bid Offer	Bid Offer	Bid Offer	Bid Offer
Treasury Bills						
LIBOR			715 730	715 730		
Domestic Depos	738 750	731 744	741 747	741 747	741 747	741 747
Eurosterling Depos	731 738	734 741	741 747	741 747	741 747	738 744
Europe Bank Bills			723 716	723 718	723 717	
Banking CDs			744 726	744 736	738 738	732 734
Euro-dollar CDs			552 558	557		
ECU Deposits			425 438	425 438	426 441	

Contract		Settlement		High		Low		Est. Floor Price		Open Interest	
Long Gt	Mar-98	122.91	123.13	122.66		47384	188861				
G Long Bond	Mar-98	106.22	106.32	106.12		15011	24254				
German Bund	Mar-98	116.83									
Italian Bond	Mar-98	117.23	117.31	117.02		34730	19898				
Japan Govt Bd	Mar-98	121.78	122.80	122.69							
3 Mth Sterling	Mar-98	92.14	92.89	92.49		53678	137275				
3 Mth Eurodollar	Mar-98	92.28	92.91	92.61		4917	126558				
3 Mth Eurodollar	Jun-98	92.42	92.42	92.39		37279	38679				
3 Mth Eurodollar	Mar-98	92.22	92.23	92.23		72694	340334				
3 Mth Eurodollar	Jun-98	92.43	92.22	92.33		23364					
3 Mth Eurodollar	Mar-98	92.08	92.10	92.03		43844	120306				
3 Mth Eurodollar	Jun-98	92.38									
3 Mth Eurodollar	Mar-98	92.13	92.14	92.07	12	12	7215				
3 Mth ECU	Jun-98	92.58	92.61	92.56		9586	48898				
3 Mth ECU	Mar-98	92.65	92.65	92.62		1159	8184				
3 Mth ECU	Jun-98	92.67	92.67	92.64		420	2684				
FTSE 100	Mar-98	5581.00	5587.00	5583.00		34523	50944				

Life FTSE 100 Index Option											
Settlement Price: 5506.40											
Series	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Call	Put	Call	Put	Call	Put	Call	Put	Call	Put	Call
5550	122	18	67	26	202	166	257	190	300	223	
5500	18	107	26	170	170	226	146	275	254		
5550	68	19	133	25	143	208	187	261	245	272	
5500	18	102	29	133	133	210	173	289			

* = \$0.05mm

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Per	52.1	62.1	90.81	76	140.25	176	3783	Mar	1550	04
Apr	52.1	62.1	90.83	Mar	147.15	176	5763	Apr	1372	04
May	52.69	0.02	2552	Apr	143.75	100	121	May	1367	04
							Jun	12.6	0.09	

Commodity Indices		Goldman Sachs		as %3M	
	Base date	Last	Chg	%Chg	31 Dec
Index	1970=100	170.78	0.51	0.22	215.26
Agricultural	1970=100	224.60	0.61	0.26	221.23
Industrial	1970=100	159.43	0.49	0.31	155.36
Int Metals	1977=100	133.56	0.00	0.00	168.79
Livestock	1970=100	170.90	-1.28	-0.73	191.03

	%Chg YTD
Index	-0.65
Agricultural	-0.26
Industrial	-0.36
Int Metals	-0.02
Livestock	-0.54

LINE (#/tonne)	Cont'd	Chg	3 months	Chg	LINE stocks	Chg
Aluminum HIG	14625	1407	450	1507	158	3
Aluminum Mid	13800	1025	100	1044	1348	3
Copper A	18825	1883.5	2.00	1907	1708	0
Lead	5985	5905	8.00	5939	54	6.5
Nickel	5460	5450	5.00	5455	195	1800
Silver	2690	2690	2.00	2676	5390	10
Zinc	1087	1088	750	1103	111	0
4895950						

Precious Metals

pm fix/2 per oz	Day's Year's	pm fix/2 per oz	Day's Year's	Colons (\$)	Year's
	Chg		Chg		Chg
Platinum 24000	1500	5225	Platinum 14470	830	2330
Palladium 21300	50	1815	Palladium 19270	320	6960
Silver 735	505	2489	Silver 4.66	129	129
Gold 2960	0.35	4490			

Colons (\$)

	Year's		Year's
	Chg		Chg
Roundheads 29655	94	6077	
Nobles 33835			
Weyle Ltd 30195			

as 50000

Agriculture

Cocoa	Coffee	Barley	Potatoes	Lgts Potatoes
LF/FE \$/tonne	LF/FE \$/tonne	LF/FE \$/tonne	LF/FE \$/tonne	LF/FE \$/tonne
Mar/96 100600	Mar/96 176000	Mar/96 75300	Mar/96 7000	Apr/96 52500
Apr/96 105000	May/96 173500	May/96 7835	Apr/96 7420	May/96 53000
Jul/96 123500	Jul/96 175000	Sep/96 7835	Jul/96 7420	Jul/96 53000
Oct/96 94500	Oct/96 3371	Oct/96 32	Oct/96 28170	Oct/96 28170

as 50000

Lgts Potatoes			
Apr/96	Apr/96	Apr/96	Apr/96
\$/2500	\$/2500	\$/2500	\$/2500
2500	2500	2500	2500

Mar91	29100	Feb92	92200	Mar92	8132	Mar92	27376	Mar92	28121
May92	29350	Apr93	105000	May92	6322	May92	29175	May92	28730
Aug92	29350	Jul92	89000	Aug92	8529	Aug92	29750	Jul92	28730
Vol	6723	Vol	79	Vol	331	Vol	56271	Vol	271

Other Softs									
Apr	Live Cattle	(CME)	\$40k/b	6639	Mar	White Meats	(SAF)	\$200 mt	9600
Feb	Port Beans	(CME)	\$40k/b	43955	Feb	Rubber	(TCM)	Y1/k	62
Mar	Orange Juice	(CTM)	\$/5k/b	10025	Mar	Cotton	(Y1)	\$/5k/b	99
Feb	Milk	(CME)	\$30k/b	14333	Mar	Cocoa Palm	(KLC)	\$/25 tn	22222
Mar	Oats	(CBT)	\$/5k/b	14800	Mar	Soyas Oil	(CBT)	\$/200 mt	22222

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

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Prayers and big players as Olympic show hits Nagano

The XVIII Winter Olympics begin tomorrow with wall to wall television coverage guaranteeing huge armchair audiences around the world. Mike Rowbottom reports from Nagano, Japan, on the greatest show in the snow.

There is a new edifice in the grounds of Nagano's ancient Zenkoji Temple - the CBS Television Centre, complete with satellite dish and a huge, roving camera crane.

Pilgrims arriving to worship at the Buddhist shrine in recent days have found film crews from the American TV network attending their devotions. And, on occasions, requesting that those devotions be repeated in order to obtain a better shot.

It is a fitting image for the modern Olympics, where time honoured ideals have to co-exist with commercialism for the Games to be viable.

The last time the Winter Olympics came to Japan - when they were held at Sapporo in 1972 - the event generated \$8.5m (£5.3m) in broadcast rights. This time, the figure is \$513m and CBS's pride of place may not be unrelated to the fact that they are paying \$375m of that figure.

The 1994 winter Olympics in Lillehammer generated the fourth largest TV audience in US history. An estimated 120 million viewers tuned in to watch Nancy Kerrigan skate against a field who included Tonya Harding, whose husband had been implicated in an attack on Kerrigan before the Games.

The 18th winter Olympics hold similar television potential, even if their dramas will lack the vicious edge of the one that was played out in the Hamar Amphitheatre.

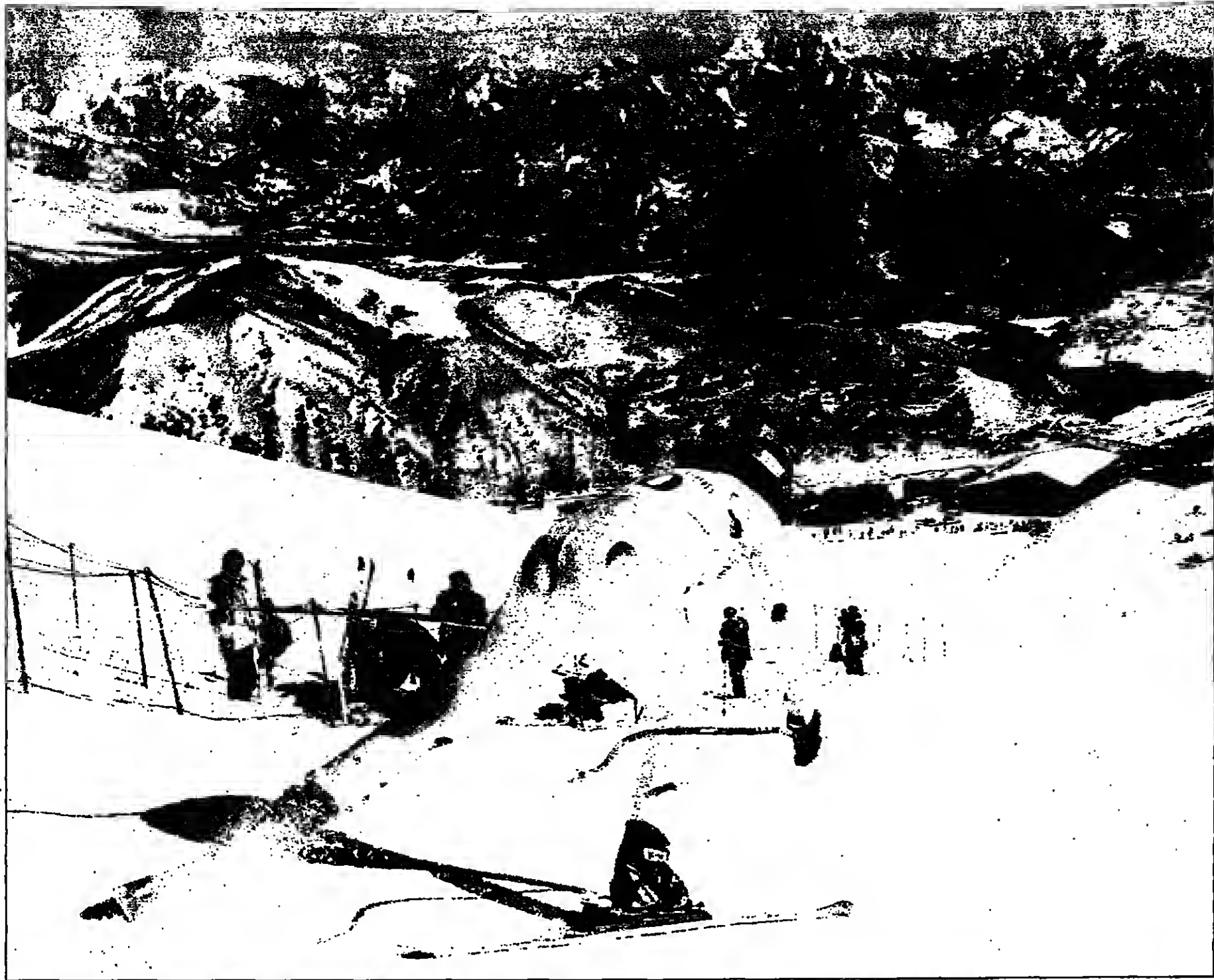
Once again, it is the women's figure skating which offers a compelling rivalry and once again the rivals are American - Tara Lipinski and Michelle Kwan.

Last year, at the age of 14, the tiny figure of Lipinski took the US and world titles away from her 17-year-old compatriot.

Lipinski's success has come as a result of developing the most technically demanding routine in the world, involving seven triple jumps. But in terms of artistry, she is not on the same rank as the graceful Kwan.

"About a second after they crowned her, the judges wanted to take it back," one American skating observer commented on Lipinski's World Championship victory.

Last month, Kwan regained her US title with a sublime performance earning a maximum 6.0 for artistry in 15 out of the possible 18 marks. She is the media darling, while Lipinski, whose acrobatics appear to have been scrutinised more critically by the judges this season, has been put on the defensive.



Going downhill: Switzerland's Markus Hermann experiences the piste at Hakuba - venue for the Olympic alpine skiing disciplines - yesterday

Photograph: Reuters

The alpine skiing events are also likely to prove compulsive viewing at the end of the season which has been dominated by the arrival of Hermann Maier.

He has been at the forefront of Austria's domination in World Cup events and is the favourite here for at least three of the five alpine disciplines - the giant slalom, the super-giant slalom and the blue ribbon event of the downhill.

Perhaps wisely, Maier downplayed his prospects in the latter event after finishing third in practice, claiming the course was too flat to favour his high-risk style. Will a course succeed where every rival has so far failed this season? Another dramatic conflict begins to build.

The TV ratings will also soar for the ice hockey competition where, for the first time, the elite professionals of the National Hockey League will take part.

The summer Games have their "Dream Team" after bringing the leading US basketball professionals of the NBA into the Olympic fold five years ago. And now the Winter Games have "The Great One" - ice hockey's legendary goal-scorer Wayne Gretzky, who, with 124 of his NHL colleagues, has been given two weeks off to represent his country.

Other innovations at these Olympics include the formal introduction of three new events - women's ice hockey, snowboarding, which is the fastest growing winter sport, and curling, which is one of the oldest.

The latter represents one of the three main medal opportunities for a lean, but keen British team of 35, the smallest in number since the 1960 Winter Games at Squaw Valley.

The Scottish quartet who form the Great Britain team - James Dryburgh, Dougie Dryburgh, John Napier and Philip Wilson - recently finished third in the European Championships and then registered a victory over the German team who won that title.

While Canada are the favourites for the gold, Britain are among five teams who could fill the other medal places.

The four-man bobsleigh team, driven by Corporal Sean Olsson, 1st

Battalion, the Parachute Regiment have a fighting chance of a medal after a highly competitive season in which they have finished fifth in the world rankings, earning two bronze medals in World Cup events.

The other prospect of British success involves the short-track speed skaters, who will be challenging for a medal in the 5,000 metres relay and are also in with a chance of taking an individual medal through Nicky Gooch, who won a bronze in the 500m at the last winter Olympics.

Steven Cousins, Britain's sole representative in the ice skating has prepared himself for an all or nothing effort in his third and, he maintains, last Olympics. Meanwhile, Graham Bell, in the alpine skiing,

and Michael Dixon, in the biathlon, are taking part in their fifth Games.

As the 3,000 athletes from 80 nations congregate in this sprawling industrialised town, the big question is whether the road network can cope. Traffic up to the skiing venue at Hakuba was held up for nearly two hours when a media bus collided with a car on the single lane road.

The police have asked the 36,486-strong population to keep their cars off the road at key times and anyone living within two miles of their work is expected to walk there. It remains to be seen whether these calls will be respected by residents who are, understandably, feeling a little grumpy. All will start to be revealed this weekend.

FIVE TO FOLLOW

Hermann Maier
Discarded from the Austrian ski programme at 15 because of a knee injury, Maier spent many years as a bricklayer before returning to the sport with the impact of a ton of bricks in 1996. He has spearheaded Austria's domination of the World Cup this season, and has golden prospects in at least three alpine events.

Michelle Kwan
This 17-year-old American skater has a vivacity and talent which leaves many observers swooning. After losing her national and world titles to the acrobatic endeavours of her young compatriot, Tara Lipinski, last year, she regained the US title last month in a fashion which has installed her as favourite for the Olympic gold.

Wayne Gretzky
At 37, this Canadian is a legendary figure in ice hockey. "The Great One", as he is known, has broken 62 scoring records in the National Hockey League, whose professionals will be allowed to contest the Olympics for the first time this year. Gretzky has scored more goals and points than anyone in the history of the game; and he has won everything in the game - except for an Olympic medal.

Deborah Compagnoni
Twice an Olympic champion, she displays the same aggressive approach to skiing as her Italian team-mate Alberto Tomba. Her displays in the giant slalom this season promise another gold. Aged 27, she is a celebrity in Italy and there are rumours that she is to marry the son of the clothing magnate, Luciano Benetton.

Masahiko Harada
Japan's world champion ski jumper has the burden of carrying the home nation's high expectations. At the last Winter Olympics he had only to produce an average performance in his last jump to secure the team gold for Japan, but he missed his take-off and landed short.

When to watch the Winter Games

The XVIIIth Winter Olympics begin with the opening ceremony in the early hours of tomorrow morning and end a fortnight on Sunday.

With Japan nine hours ahead of Britain, most of the outdoor events will take place in the early hours of the morning British time. The indoor events will generally start in the afternoon and evening locally. Most figure skating sessions, for example, start at 7pm (10am British time).

BBC television coverage will generally start around midnight during the first week in order to bring live coverage of the alpine skiing events. However, there will be little late-night live coverage in the second week.

In midweek the BBC will broadcast a one-hour breakfast time programme starting at 7.45, followed by a two-hour lunchtime programme generally beginning at 12.30. Full highlights will usually be broadcast in an evening programme from 19.00-20.30. Coverage will be more extensive at the weekend. Eurosport, meanwhile, will have 24-hour coverage.

Saturday's timetable
(Times in GMT)
Opening ceremony: 0200
Ice hockey: Italy v Kazakhstan 0700; Austria v Slovakia 0700; Germany v Japan 1100; France v Belarus 1100.

TV Times
Tonight: BBC2: 16.00-18.45 Preview (repeated 00.05-00.50). BBC1: 01.55-04.00 opening ceremony. Eurosport: 20.00-24.00.
Tomorrow: BBC2: Opening ceremony highlights 16.25-17.25. Eurosport: 20.00-24.00.

Gooch speeds towards gold before swapping skates for pedals

One of the few chances Great Britain has of a gold medal lies with Nicky Gooch, the speed skater with a bent for bicycles. Mike Rowbottom caught up with Guildford's blade runner as he warmed up for Nagano.

Nicky Gooch, Britain's leading speed skater, has long-term ambitions to compete at the summer Olympics in cycling. But for now, this 25-year-old from Guildford is seeking further medals on the ice to add to the Olympic 500 metres bronze he won four years ago.

To employ a little cycling terminology, however, returning to

Nagano to compete in the XVIIIth Winter Games is, for Gooch, equivalent to getting back on his bike after a serious fall.

Last year Gooch competed in this Japanese city at the World Championships. The result, in his own succinct assessment, was "nightmare". A broken skate in the 1500m and a mysterious disqualification in the 500m effectively ruined the whole outing for Gooch. He can only hope that he has had all his bad luck here.

The whole feel of these Olympics is different for Gooch to the last one, as he reflected ruefully shortly before winning his fifth national title in December.

At the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, almost all the British attention in his event was focused on the man who preceded him as national

No. 1, Wilf O'Reilly. The genial Brummie was expected to add an official Olympic title to the two gold medals he had won in 1988 when speed skating was included in the Games as a demonstration sport.

By the end of those Games, however, O'Reilly's ambitions in both the 500 and 1,000m had been frustrated by damage to his skating blades, and Gooch came away with a bronze medal in the 500m, having recovered from the disappointment of being disqualified from silver medal position in the 1,000m for pushing.

Now he finds himself as one of the handful of identifiable British medal hopes at these Games, a situation which leaves him feeling ambivalent.

In speed skating terms, Gooch thinks of himself as a middle-distance athlete rather than a sprinter, an all-

rounder rather than a specialist speedster. "Things would have to go very well for me to get a medal in the 500 metres," he said, "but I am skating close to world record times."

And, indeed, he won the European 500m at the event last month, despite having his preparations affected by an unflattering bout of flu.

But it is the 1,000 metres which remains Gooch's big hope, the event where he finished third in the pre-Olympic qualifying, which probably gives the best guide to form in a notoriously volatile sport.

"I'm looking at the gold medal this time," said Gooch, who now believes he is at his peak in a sport where the South Korean world champion is 18.

"For most skaters, it is a downward curve from here," he said. "These will be my last Winter Games."

But not, he hopes, his last Games. His dream is to go on to the summer Olympics of 2004 in Athens as a cyclist - specifically, a mountain biker.

Cycling forms a big part of Gooch's training, and is something with which he has a great affinity. "I've raced with mountain bikes and I think if I dedicated myself to the training I could do it," he said.

You would not bet against this pale, determined character succeeding in that ambition. He has, after all, negotiated much difficulty and misfortune thus far in his career.

At the 1992 Winter Olympics in Albertville, when he was 20, he had a calamitous fall. In the lead-up to the 1994 Olympics, he had a world 1500m record annulled because it was only hand-timed at the Nottingham rink where it was set.



Nicky Gooch: "These will be my last Winter Games"

And then there was the disqualification in the 1,000m final, where he was adjudged to have brought down the Canadian Derrick Campbell while overtaking.

"I always seem to do well when I am up against it," he said. "I don't know why. Maybe it's something to do with needing the adrenalin."

SNOW REPORTS

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Fax reports 0897 500 086 + code

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Resort	Comment	Area open	Last snow	Lowest temp	Upp. temp	Forecast
ANDORRA						
Val d'Aran	Dry snow at all elevations	100%	7.2	50	60	Fair
AUSTRIA						
Kitzbühel	icy patches on lower slopes	95%	7.1	40	50	Sunny
BULGARIA						
Pamporovo	Relatively good conditions	100%	7.2	60	60	Light cloud
CANADA						
Whistler	Powdery snow on all slopes	100%	5.2	40	50	Sunny
FRANCE						
Tignes	Sol good at altitude	85%	7.1	40	50	Sunny
ITALY						
Val Gardena	Monte Vigio lifts are open	100%	7.1	50	60	Dry, sunny, cold
ROMANIA						
Rebra Brasov	Firm packed snow at all levels	100%	7.2	50	60	Cloudy
SPAIN						
Serra Nevada	Prospects good for weekend	85%	7.2	30	60	Light snow
SWEDEN						
Åre	Firm packed snow	80%	7.2	40	40	Blue sky
SWITZERLAND						
Cortina d'Ampezzo	Dry packed snow on piste	95%	7.1	50	60	Fine
UNITED STATES						
Aspen	Light cover of powder at all levels	80%	7.2	40	50	Part cloudy

Snow Reports supplied by Ski Hotline

SAILING

Silk Cut in collision

Silk Cut's unhappy Whitbread Round the World Race continued yesterday when she reported hitting an unidentified object five days out from Auckland on the fifth leg to Brazil.

The British boat, skippered by Lawrie Smith, damaged her bow, but was not taking on water. The setback on the leg Smith must win to have any chance of the overall prize came as the fleet geared up for the southern ocean and Cape Horn.

Due to a production error, the wrong strapline, "Drugs in sport", appeared in some editions above yesterday's report of the Whitbread Round the World race. We apologise for this mistake.

Positions, Digest, page 27

Watching hawks poised to soar on high winds

It is not the forecast of big winds that is worrying us on Merit Cup in the Whitbread Round the World race at the moment, but the prospect of a steady 20 to 30 knots to give fast running conditions as we turn left towards Cape Horn. If anything I am more fearful of 30-knot winds than I am of 50.

With 30 knots we are right on the margin when carrying our big spinnakers and when you are on the margin you can suffer some pretty scary wipe-outs. In 50 knots the mainsail is well reefed down and there is very little else up.

On the plus side, these are the conditions in which there can be some big runs and after the relatively easy start the whole fleet will want to get on with the job of tackling this southern ocean leg.

At least we can all feel a little relief that no one has stolen a march during the tramp south. The only worry was seeing Cheshire Racing and Toshiba heading east. That sort of thing makes a skipper wonder about his own tactics.

However, we had Silk Cut and Swedish Match with us, so obviously some others thought we were doing the right thing. As it happens Cheshire and Toshiba came back. The strategy of striking hard south has been established and the opportunity for breaks nullified.

It has been tricky first five days. We were watching each other like hawks and you could be sure that if you made what looked like a decisive change in direction then two or three boats would immediately follow. And for some reason it has seemed to take longer than normal to get back into sleeping and eating patterns. Perhaps it was because we New Zealanders had such a busy time at home in Auckland.

If there is a niggly at all it has been seeing Lawrie Smith in Silk Cut showing better than expected speed in the light to moderate conditions which should have given us an advantage. And we know what he can do in the heavier stuff.

On the other hand Swedish Match has not enjoyed the conditions, but she has survived in them long enough to be in with the bunch as the new pattern emerges.

The distances between the top seven boats can be discounted, as they can be made up quickly in the conditions we should have for the remaining 5,700 miles. The only damage has been a bent stanchion and the crew are in good shape.

A New Zealand Air Force plane passed overhead just before we altered course to head more east. That is something we only expect when approaching home, a sort of welcoming signal. This time it was to say goodbye and the next land we expect to see is the notorious Cape Horn at the tip of South America. That, too, will be a welcome sight.

GRANT DALTON

هكذا من الأصل

FOOTBALL

Beckham's thoughts on fame game and Munich add spice to £3.5m boot deal

Dry ice, loud music, stroboscopic lights - they launch West End shows with less fuss. All this for a boot sponsorship, but yesterday the player was David Beckham.

Guy Hodgson was there.

You could hear the approach of the full-scale personality and part-time footballer from half

a mile away. The deep, satisfying roar of a Porsche heralded David Beckham's arrival as surely as trumpets used to announce a monarch.

In the 1950s Bobby Charlton would walk into the city for a night out with the other Manchester United players, set apart from the man on the terraces only by their ability. Not now. Can you imagine Ryan Giggs in a bus queue, or Beckham knocking about in a beat-up Escort?

On the day before today's

40th anniversary of the Munich air crash, Beckham was on display to announce a seven-year deal with Adidas that will earn him £3.5m. At 22, in the space of six years he has gone from cleaning Bryan Robson's footwear to filling his boots by the simple expedient of being talented in them. Duncan Edwards thought he had made it when the club started supplying studs.

You read so many things about Beckham that when you hear him speak it is a surprise. Quiet, embarrassed even, he was anything but flash. Soberly he addressed his image, his temper and Munich.

Even he is shocked at the rocket, partly-Push Spice powered, rise from the nervous debutant against Leeds in April 1995 to becoming one of the most famous people in the country. "I didn't expect it to come so quickly," he said. "It's been hard to keep up with."

"There's been a few articles in the papers that say I've got too high for my boots but people who know me say I'm just the same. Things have changed in my life but I haven't - too many people would knock me down if I did. The criticism hurts sometimes and I worry about the effect on my family."

Which would be fine except that Beckham has the habit of courting publicity as well as one of Britain's most desirable women. His celebration at Chelsea recently, hands behind ears directed at supporters who

harracked him, was not designed to win friends and neither are the occasional on-field flashes of temper.

"There's a picture in a magazine of the abuse I was getting from the Chelsea fans when I was taking a corner there," he countered by reference to the provocation he faces each week. "It doesn't bother me, but when I celebrate I don't think I've done anything wrong. I haven't stuck two fingers up or anything."

As for his short fuse he says

both his club manager, Alex Ferguson, and the England coach, Glenn Hoddle, have spoken to him and are satisfied with him and are satisfied with him and are satisfied with him.

"Saturday will be a great day and a sad day," Beckham, a member of the last generation of United players to meet Sir Matt Busby, said, "and hopefully we'll perform in the way the Busby Babes would have done, get the result in style."

BOXING

King ready to fight Tyson's freedom bid

Mike Tyson has made it clear that he intends to end his professional relationship with Don King - a move that King is certain to oppose.

Matt Trench reports.

On the day that Mike Tyson was due to announce his involvement in a professional wrestling promotion it became clear that he was about to embark on what may prove the trickiest fight of his career: to free himself from the clutches of Don King.

Tyson made his intentions known in a statement released by Jerry Wald, a Los Angeles music entrepreneur. In it Tyson said: "I have taken control of my own affairs, both personal and business. I have hired new attorneys and accountants who report directly to me. I have formed Mike Tyson Enterprises and I am in the process of moving forward with my life."

Tyson is thought to have chosen Wald and his partner, Irvine Azof, to replace King, but Wald refused to shed light on any future role he might have, saying only: "At the present time I am not answering any questions, but stay tuned."

Tyson, who is banned from boxing for after hitting Evander Holyfield's ear in a championship bout last June, has been promoted by King for the last 10 years. He is also thought to be determined to sever his relationship with his two co-managers, John Horne and Rory Holloway.

All three can be expected to fiercely contest Tyson's attempts to free himself from contractual relationships with them, and the matter could well result in a messy and protracted court action. Dr Elias Ghanem, the chairman of the Nevada State Athletic Commission which will adjudicate on Tyson's application to have his licence re-

newed in July, said it would be "very hard" for Tyson to break his contract with King, Horne and Holloway.

"I don't know if Tyson is thinking that since he is not licensed, that his contract is void," Ghanem said. "It would be very hard for someone to sign with someone else, knowing he already has a valid contract. The way I understand it, it would be hard for Tyson to sign with anyone else without Don King releasing him."

Ghanem's statement gave credence to the view that Tyson might jeopardise his chances of regaining his licence by ditching King. The outcome of any hearing about the licence "depends on Mike Tyson's behaviour and what he does inside and outside the ring," Ghanem said.

Ghanem said he was also concerned about reports that Tyson may owe as much as \$7m (£4.3m) in taxes. "Anytime somebody has a tax problem, usually the IRS would put a lien on his purse before he gets in the ring. That would be an issue. We don't like to get involved in that," Ghanem said.

"It wouldn't surprise me if the \$7m is accurate," a anonymous source close to the parties told the American news agency Associated Press. The source added: "He can't just walk away from a contract. Mike is just frustrated right now because he can't fight."

Tyson was widely reported to have assaulted King outside a Los Angeles hotel last weekend, but so far all King's public utterances about Tyson have been extremely conciliatory. "I love Mike Tyson and he knows it," King said in a statement earlier this week.

Tyson has earned an estimated \$140m in six fights since he was released from an Indiana prison in 1995 after serving time on rape charges. The New York Post claims that Tyson is down to \$150,000 in liquid assets.

RUGBY UNION: FIVE NATIONS' CHAMPIONSHIP



England players show dogged determination in getting rid of an intruder at training in Buc yesterday Photograph: PA

Rodber and Dawson have to pull out

Tim Rodber and Matt Dawson, two of England's potential replacements for tomorrow's Five Nations' Championship confrontation with France, were forced to withdraw from the squad yesterday.

Chris Hewett reports on a bizarre outbreak of stresses and strains among the bit-part extras.

Clive Woodward described it as a "gentle, walk-through session", but by the time England's finely tuned band of rugby thoroughbreds returned to their Versailles base to be fed, watered and pampered in preparation for tomorrow's big game, two of them had cried off injured. God only knows what would have happened had the coach given his players a real workout yesterday.

Matt Dawson, the reserve scrum-half, managed to pick up some shoulder damage during

the half-paced amble on an all-weather football pitch at Buc, a few miles outside the capital. Tim Rodber, his Northampton club-mate, did not even get that far. He warmed up by stretching his hamstrings and promptly stretched one of them a touch too far.

All of which left a bemused Woodward with seven fit replacements - the number he is allowed under new International Board regulations. Under normal circumstances, he would have been forced to call up a new scrum-half, either from the England A squad in Tours or from one of the Premiership clubs back home in Blighty.

However, the versatility of Austin Healey, England's left wing, gives Woodward automatic cover should anything untoward happen to Kyrn Bracken during tomorrow's hostilities.

As things stand, England will have two backs and five forwards on the bench, but they can get away with such an imbalance because the admirable Matt Pary covers every position from outside-half to full-back. Woodward will have an entire reserve front row at his disposal along

with a specialist lock and a No 8 in Danny Grewcock and Tony Diprose respectively.

"The use of substitutes is becoming an increasingly important tactical aspect of international rugby," said Woodward, who may be tempted to introduce Graham Rowntree, Doran West and Phil Vickery en bloc if things go wrong in the front row. Even so, he would have preferred to have kept both Dawson and Rodber up his sleeve. Both men played in the two winning Lions Tests against the Springboks last summer and Rodber, in particular, has the clout to punch his weight in a rough game.

Despite the French selectors' willingness to gamble with a lighter, more fluid pack, England expect tomorrow's match to be physical in the extreme.

"It will be hard up front and our discipline will be a key area, especially amongst the tight five of the scrum," said John Mitchell, whose quiet authority has proved so valuable to Woodward in the first six months of his stewardship. "I'm pretty nervous, to be honest. More nervous than I was before any of the big games before Christmas."

Not as nervous, though, as the ground staff at the frost-bound Stade de France. After a week of public berating, embarrassing headlines and almost terminal confusion, they were awaiting the removal of the pitch covers at first light this morning in a state of advanced trepidation. As darkness fell last night, however, the omens were reassuring.

Nigel Felton, the Somerset and Northants cricketer turned pitch specialist called in to help save the game from postponement, reported yesterday that his emergency measures had resulted in a thaw across two-thirds of the playing area and he was virtually certain that the showpiece occasion - the first rugby international played at the new stadium - would go ahead without further hassle.

Moseley, who went into financial administration last Friday, made 12 of their full-time professionals redundant yesterday, including the Canadian international, Al Charron. The club lost an estimated £500,000 last season and a further £400,000 in the six months up to Christmas.

Klinsmann to miss only three weeks

Jürgen Klinsmann, who broke his jaw during Tottenham's FA Cup fourth-round defeat at Barnsley on Wednesday night but will not need surgery, should return to Premiership in three weeks' time. The German captain spent the night in hospital after a collision with Arjan de Zeeuw, the Barnsley centre-back.

Crystal Palace have beaten off interest from Manchester United and will complete the £1m signing of Carisle's 20-year-old striker, Matt Jansen, early next week subject to a medical. The fee could double depending on appearances.

Leicester City have completed the signing of Greece's captain, Theo Zagarakis, from PAOK Salonika for £750,000. The striker Dele Adebola has completed the formalities of his £1m move from Crewe to their First Division rivals, Birmingham City. Nigel Jenson has also switched First Division clubs, the striker joining Bury from Oxford for £100,000.

The Football Association will take no action over the trouble at Reading's FA Cup match against Cardiff at Elm Park. A female steward was hit in the face and a ball girl was pushed in separate incidents at Tuesday's fourth-round replay, which Reading won on penalties.

The Newcastle defender Steve Watson has a broken foot and will be out of action for between six to eight weeks, missing the England B international against Chile B on Tuesday. Newcastle have given another England B defender, John Beresford, permission to talk to Southampton, and it is understood the clubs have agreed a fee of £1.5m.

Francis Jeffers, the 17-year-old Everton striker who has been hailed as the next Michael Owen, is signing a five-year contract at Goodison worth around £1m. Newcastle United had shown interest in him.

Alan Nixon

NON-LEAGUE NOTEBOOK

Lymington hope their luck will hold after fourth-round drama

Of the 16 clubs left in the FA Carlsberg Vase, perhaps the luckiest to be involved in tomorrow's fifth round are Lymington.

In last month's fourth round the Jewson Wessex League title chasers escaped from Essex still in the tournament thanks to a remarkable incident at Braintree Town. In extra time, with the score level at 0-0, the home side's Neil Grice shot home - but the ball went through the back of the net and, despite an admission from the Lymington goalkeeper, Wayne Shaw, that he had been beaten, the goal was disallowed.

Shaw became involved in arguments with Braintree supporters and was sent off for hurling the ball at a spectator. Lymington's 10 men hung on for a replay, which also ended in acrimonious circumstances. The Essex side were leading 1-0 with 10 minutes to go when their goalkeeper, Paul Catley, was sent off for a foul.

Trevor Gunn, a defender, went in goal and saved Nigel Mottashed's penalty. He was beaten by another spot-kick from the same player two minutes later, however, after a hotly contested handball verdict from the referee. A second Braintree player, John Bishop, was then dismissed for retaliation.

Derby's manager, Jim Smith, is annoyed that Fifa, world football's governing body, has given official backing to the Gold Cup taking place in America. Smith is unhappy at being without Paul Vanchope - who scored four goals in Costa Rica's 7-2 victory over Cuba on Wednesday - and Dean Burton for tomorrow's home game with Aston Villa because they are involved in what he describes as "a training warm-up" for the summer World Cup finals. At least Trinidad and Tobago gave Dwight Yorke permission to miss the tournament.

Nottingham Forest, pursuing promotion from the First Division, are considering scrapping their reserve team and replacing it with an under-21 side. They hope that team would play in a new FA Under-21 league, while continuing to compete in the new Premier Youth League.

Manchester City yesterday transfer-listed 15 players in a bid to cut their wage bill. The list includes Nigel Clough and Eddie McGoldrick but only one player signed by the manager, Frank Clark - Paul Beesley, bought from Leeds for £500,000 a year ago.

Walsall were yesterday anxiously awaiting news of their French striker, Roger Boli, after reports suggested he had walked out on the Second Division club, and was in France training with one of his former clubs, Lens.

Francis Jeffers, the 17-year-old Everton striker who has been hailed as the next Michael Owen, is signing a five-year contract at Goodison worth around £1m. Newcastle United had shown interest in him.

Alan Nixon

SPORTING DIGEST

Archery
Janine Whitlock has broken her own British pole-vault record at a meeting in Erfurt, East Germany. She cleared 4.15 metres to set her third British record of the year and beat her previous best of 4.02m.

Baseball
Oakland's Cuban-born outfielder and designated hitter Jose Canseco has signed a one-year contract with Toronto Blue Jays.

Basketball
WEDNESDAY'S LATE RESULTS: Utah Valley defeated first leg, Portland State 113 Greater London Leopards 85. Basketball League: Birmingham 123 Haverhill 85.

TODAY'S FIXTURES

Football
NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE THIRD DIVISION
Colchester v Swindon (7.45)
Leyton Orient v Peterborough (7.45)
LEAGUE OF WALES: Carmarthen v Bangor City (7.45); Aberystwyth v Cardiff v Cardiff (7.45)
UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL: Exeter v Exeter (7.45)
UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL: Exeter v Exeter (7.45)
UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL: Exeter v Exeter (7.45)

Rugby Union
INTERNATIONALS: France v England (12.15); Ireland v Scotland (12.15)
CONFERENCES:
WEDNESDAY'S LATE RESULTS: France v England (12.15); Ireland v Scotland (12.15)
CONFERENCES:
WEDNESDAY'S LATE RESULTS: France v England (12.15); Ireland v Scotland (12.15)

Rugby League
WEDNESDAY'S LATE RESULTS: England v Wales (12.15); Scotland v Ireland (12.15)
CONFERENCES:
WEDNESDAY'S LATE RESULTS: England v Wales (12.15); Scotland v Ireland (12.15)

Cricket
SECOND TEST (second day of test): West Indies v England (12.15)
SECOND UNOFFICIAL TEST (first day of test): Sri Lanka A v England A (12.15)

Basketball
NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE: Sheffield Stars v Derby County (7.45)
CONFERENCES:
WEDNESDAY'S LATE RESULTS: Sheffield Stars v Derby County (7.45)

Other sports
WEDNESDAY'S LATE RESULTS: Sheffield Stars v Derby County (7.45)
CONFERENCES:
WEDNESDAY'S LATE RESULTS: Sheffield Stars v Derby County (7.45)

TODAY'S NUMBER

2

The number of trillion won (₩72m) that South Korea plans to spend on 10 new stadiums for the 2002 football World Cup, to be hosted jointly with Japan. The president-elect, Kim Dae-jung, called yesterday for the upgrade of existing venues instead.

ON WEDNESDAY IT WAS THEM.

Draw date: 4/2/98. The winning numbers: 13, 17, 32, 35, 42, 45. Bonus number: 20.

Total Sales: £30,304,915. Prize Fund: £13,637,213 (45% of ticket sales).

CATEGORY	NO. OF WINNERS	AMOUNT FOR EACH WINNER	TOTAL EACH TIER
Match 6 (Lucky Dip)	4	£1,113,238	£4,453,552
Match 6 plus bonus ball	33	£41,631	£1,373,223
Match 6	540	£1,590	£859,800
Match 4	28,158	£87	£2,458,584
Match 3	605,076	£10	£6,050,760
TOTALS	833,811		£13,637,213

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IT COULD BE YOU! THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

In the event of any discrepancy in the above, the data contained in Camelot's central computer system shall prevail.

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CRICKET: SECOND TEST

Pacemen push England out of the comfort zone

Derek Pringle
reports from the Queen's
Park Oval, Trinidad

England 130-6
v West Indies

Two major events happened here in Port of Spain yesterday. The Test series between England and the West Indies got past the hour mark and Jack Russell finally got the chance to earn his 50th cap. However, the fact that Russell was out immediately after tea, meant that England, despite enjoying a solid start, were once again in deep trouble against the West Indies fast bowling machine.

When he won the toss at 9.35 am, Michael Atherton, had no hesitation in batting first. With the pitch having been given an early morning shave it was probably the right decision by the England captain and one that, despite his side's early good fortune with the bat, looked to be vindicated when they lunched on 70 for 1.

But comfort zones are rela-

tive against the West Indies bowlers who tend to bulldoze rather than work their way through chinks in their opponents' armour. Once Alec Stewart had gone for a fortuitous 50, England lost three wickets for 37 runs in 14 overs, including the important one of Graham Thorpe, caught behind on the stroke of tea after cutting lazily at the gentle off-spin of Carl Hooper.

With a traditional fast bowling base underpinning their game plan, West Indies sides have a reputation for putting their opponents in to bat and hitting them hard. It is a tried and tested plan and one Brian Lara would not have deviated from had he won the toss.

England on the other hand, tend to play things more by the book - the MCC coaching manual - preferring to put runs on the board, in the hope that deteriorating conditions will provide help to the bowlers later.

Only a game like cricket tends to throw up such contrasting philosophies and, although Atherton has had occasion to insert the opposition,

yesterday, despite the greenish pitch, was not one of them.

On balance, it was the right decision too. The bat may have been passed, but up until lunch, only the captain had been breached, a situation most England sides would have been happy with in the Caribbean on far flatter pitches than this.

To be fair to the home side's bowlers, who were perhaps a touch short and wide of off stump for this surface, the pitch was not as lush and grassy as it was on the previous day. The ball still moved about, however, sometimes alarmingly so, and England's batsmen endured harrowing moments.

Switching ends away from the one where he had destroyed England four years ago, Curtly Ambrose did what he claimed was most important to the West Indian cause and removed Atherton. It was a marvellous piece of fast bowling and having twice passed Atherton's outside edge in successive balls, the third managed to find its way to Lara at first slip.

With his bat slightly skewed,

Atherton, no doubt expecting a bouncer, was slightly off balance. The fact that the response was not perhaps what he expected was a triumph for Ambrose's nous and patience over the more traditional fast bowler's instincts.

However, for those who believe there is a dearth of the quick but slightly raw Caribbean pacemen of old, the sight of Nixon McLean, ought to rekindle fond memories. Bowling from the Pavilion End, the 24-year-old McLean was a yard or so faster than his colleagues. He had countless moral victories against Stewart, whom he beat time and again, with pace and movement from his easy high action. On another day he will bowl worse and take wickets.

It was not the only good fortune Stewart enjoyed, and apart from surviving a fairly plumb looking lbw appeal from Ambrose early on, the England opener was twice dropped in the slips, on 41 and 43.

When he was not busy impersonating a black cat, Stewart played his usual array of handsome strokes, particularly off the back foot, which he tends to favour rather too often even when he is set.

Indeed he had just reached his 50 with a neat clip to leg for two off Kenny Benjamin, when the next ball nipped back and pinned him in front of his stumps. Had he played forward, he would probably have survived.

With Nasser Hussain the new batsman at the crease and John Crawley bogged down, the bowlers slipped their leashes in a bid for further progress.

No team do this quite as well as the West Indies, who seem to be able to sense unease among the opposition. Although this was obvious in Crawley's case, when he became becalmed after lunch, a nasty blow to Hussain's bottom hand, was conclusive evidence of the extra effort.

Returning to the Northern End, a lifter from Ambrose put Crawley out of his misery. Having defended well to begin with, the Lancashire man appeared to have given up on scoring runs altogether after lunch. Apart from a handsomely struck four through extra cover off Benjamin, scoring shots were few and far between, and his 17 came from 100 balls.

Thorpe then followed, much to the delight of the home supporters, who blew their conch shells and waved flags. When Adam Hobbins, run out in controversial circumstances after the keeper David Williams dislodged a ball with his gloves before the ball had arrived, they knew England's way back was a long and difficult road.



Mike Atherton jumps to avoid a ball from Courtney Walsh during England's first innings in the second Test in Port of Spain, Trinidad, yesterday. Photograph: David Ashdown

FOOTBALL

Sutton snubbed Hoddle by refusing his England B call

Chris Sutton's England career may be over after just 11 minutes, following his decision to pull out of the B squad yesterday. The Blackburn forward, who has been replaced by Ipswich's Jamie Scowcroft, has withdrawn from the game against Chile because he was not included in the senior squad and has thereby almost certainly ensured he will never again be selected by Glenn Hoddle.

Sutton, who has scored 15 goals this season, was given his England chance in the November friendly against Cameroon, when he replaced Paul Scholes after 79 minutes of the 2-0 win.

When Hoddle named his squads for next week's matches against Chile, Sutton found himself in the B ranks for the game at West Bromwich 24 hours before the full international. Hoddle tried to explain he had selected Sutton for the first match to ensure he had a full game against the South American side rather than turning up at Bisham Abbey merely to sit in the stand.

But Sutton's anger at his "demotion" has led to a fit of pique, with the 23-year-old calling Hoddle to inform him he was not interested in being anything other than a senior squad man.

Hoddle said he had tried to get the striker to change his mind, even enlisting the help of Blackburn's manager, Roy Hodgson. "I spoke to Chris yesterday," Hoddle said. "I tried to persuade him not to pull out of the squad, as did his club manager. But in the end, it's his decision. If someone doesn't want to play for their country at any level I won't force them. That's his decision."

Blackburn said they "respected" his right to pull out. Sutton's relationship with Hoddle has been stormy, with the England coach clashing with the striker after Sutton publicly queried why he had not been selected for the World Cup qualifying match against Moldova.

Then he was told to talk to the coach rather than the press, with Hoddle holding out the chance of Sutton being given his chance in future matches, which happened against Cameroon.

- Martin Lipton and John Curtis

United line up Bergen talent

Manchester United are discussing terms with the Norwegian prodigy, Erlend Hanesveit. But under the terms of the mooted deal, the 17-year-old Brann Bergen midfielder would not become an official Old Trafford player until 2001.

If negotiations are successful, Hanesveit could sign preliminary forms with United, but there will be a loan-style agreement whereby he will play for his current club for the next three seasons.

"There have been discussions, but nothing has been finalised," the United director, Maurice Watkins, said yesterday.

Norway has proved to be a fruitful source of players for the United manager, Alex Ferguson, with Ronny Johnsen and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer both enjoying success at Old Trafford.

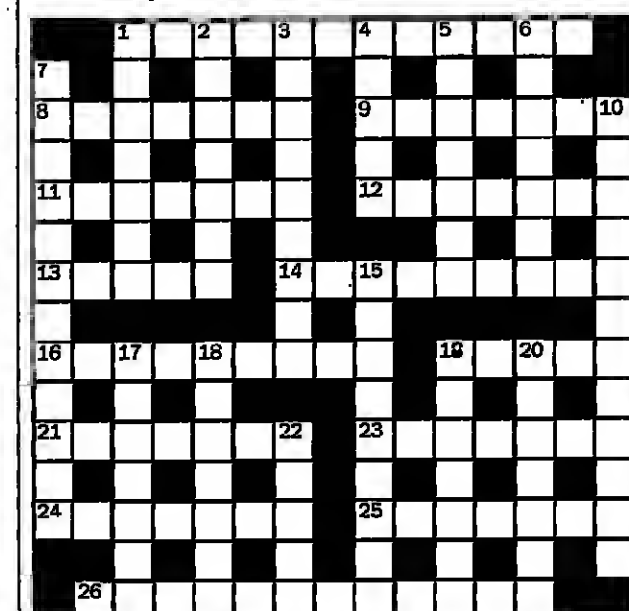
Middlesbrough's David Nash takes over the wicketkeeping gloves from Read after sitting out the first Test and Northamptonshire batsman David Sales also returns to replace Flintoff.

ENGLAND A (Second unofficial Test, v Sri Lanka, Galle, today) M V Forth (capt), S P James, D L Moody, D J Sales, B C Holliman, A F Green, J C Powell, D C Henry (wk), D A Coaker or D R Brown, M A Ealham, P M Hutchinson.

- Myles Hodgson, Galle

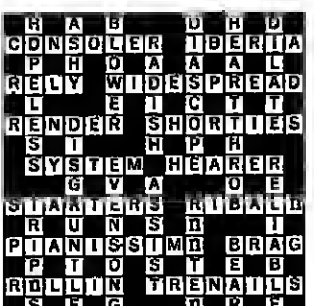
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3527, Friday 6 February By Phil



- ACROSS**
- 1 Played a little music and evoked memories? (6,1,5)
 - 8 Beneficiary - she's upset, stifling anger (7)
 - 9 Elaborate former currency (7)
 - 11 Islands seen as waterlogged soil in black period (7)
 - 12 Is very angry. "Look at most of the objects here" (7)
 - 13 Youngster following to add drink to glass (3,2)
 - 14 Official less likely, on reflection, to take in essential point (9)
 - 16 Elaborate Order I confused with MBE (9)
 - 19 Reversing is, in a taxi, quite straightforward (5)
 - 21 Thrills unknown in European Community group one backed (7)
 - 23 Bird in pub currently wanting head on lager (4-3)
 - 24 Someone beating finally shattered glass (7)
 - 25 Outright base used on "All-In Wrestling" (7)
 - 26 This instrument whines plenty badly (5-7)
- DOWN**
- 1 Prison runs up something to restrain the foot (7)
 - 2 Cut part of film joke? Supply with more material (2-5)
 - 3 Had equal billing in cast order, possibly (3-7)
 - 4 Helps as when accepting wager (5)
 - 5 Helps as when turning unlucky (7)
 - 6 Most of cosmetic on girl's comparatively abrasive (7)
 - 7 Running out of beer is the limit! (3,6,3)
 - 10 I'd taken up stiff position for Tube route (8,4)
 - 15 US soldier bringing in a vulgar Italian leader... (9)
 - 17 ... as a result of live issue (7)
 - 18 Turk's excessive, taking on Arab state (7)
 - 19 Nobleman dropping ring in part of North London (7)
 - 20 Spy almost paid for misinformation (7)
 - 22 Lumps turning up in animal fodder (5)

Monday's Solution



QUEEN'S PARK OVAL SCOREBOARD

England won toss
ENGLAND - First Innings
"M A Atherton c Lara b Ambrose ... 11
A J Stewart lbw b Benjamin ... 50
J P Crawley c S Williams b Ambrose ... 17
N Hussain not out ... 22
G P Thorpe c D Williams b Hooper ... 8
A J Hollis run out ... 2
D C Russell c S Williams b McLean ... 0
Extras (b, lb, nb) ... 16
Total (for 6, 61.5 overs) ... 126
To bat: A R Caddick, J W Hoadley, A R C Fraser, P C R Turner
West Indies - 1st Innings
S Chandrasekhar ... 8 C Lums, C L Hooper
J C Adams, Y D Williams, G E L Ambrose, N A M McLean, K C G Benjamin, C A Walsh
Umpires: S A Bucknor and S Venkataratnam
TV replay umpire: C E Cumberbatch
Match referee: S N James
First Test: 29 January-2 February (Lancashire) Match abandoned as a draw
Third Test: 13-17 February (Trinidad and Tobago)
Fourth Test: 27 February-3 March (Guyana)
Fifth Test: 12-16 March (Barbados)
Sixth Test: 20-24 March (Antigua)

Three spinners to add twist

England A are planning to enter the second unofficial Test in Galle today with three spinners in an attempt to exploit Sri Lanka's dusty and dry pitches.

The tourists had difficulty dislodging the Sri Lankan batsmen in the drawn first Test in Kurunegala but have since been strengthened by the arrival of Jonathan Powell and Owais Shah following England World Youth Cup success in South Africa.

Despite nearly two days of travelling - the pair returned to London with the rest of the World Cup squad before flying on to Colombo on Wednesday - England believe the Essex off-spinner Powell will be a valuable addition to their bowling options alongside the left-armers Ashley Giles and Dean Cosker.

Powell played only one first-class match for his county prior to his surprising selection for

the A tour and has been named in a 12-man squad as England delay finalising their line-up until they inspect the pitch.

Shah has been overlooked, along with James Ormond, Chris Read and Andrew Flintoff, but he is sure to play in next week's finale to the three-match series in Moratuwa in line with England's policy to give every squad member at least one Test and a one-day international before the end of the tour.

Although Powell has just one Championship appearance and a handful of Sunday League games to his credit, he is far from inexperienced, having toured with the under-19s in Pakistan.

"The under-19s have been going quite a few years now and some of us have been lucky enough to go on a few tours and pick up experience," he said. "If

we progress to Test level we will have already played against a lot of players of our age group from other countries, which should be a big help to us."

The Warwickshire all-rounder Dougie Brown is the most likely to miss out today, should the Matara wicket prove to be similar to Kurunegala's slow turner. If so then Cosker will keep his place in the side alongside both Powell and Giles to leave Ben Hollis, Paul Hutchison and Mark Ealham as England's seam options.

Middlesex's David Nash takes over the wicketkeeping gloves from Read after sitting out the first Test and Northamptonshire batsman David Sales also returns to replace Flintoff.

- Myles Hodgson, Galle

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